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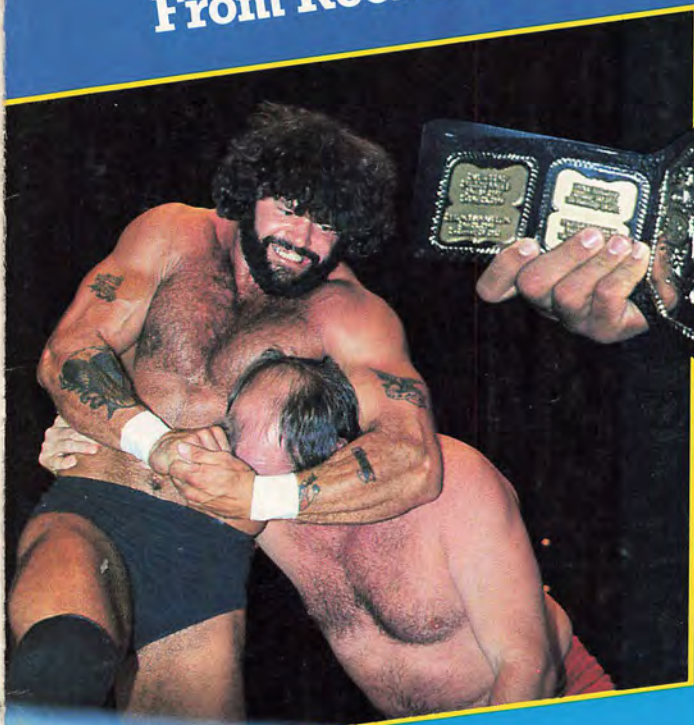
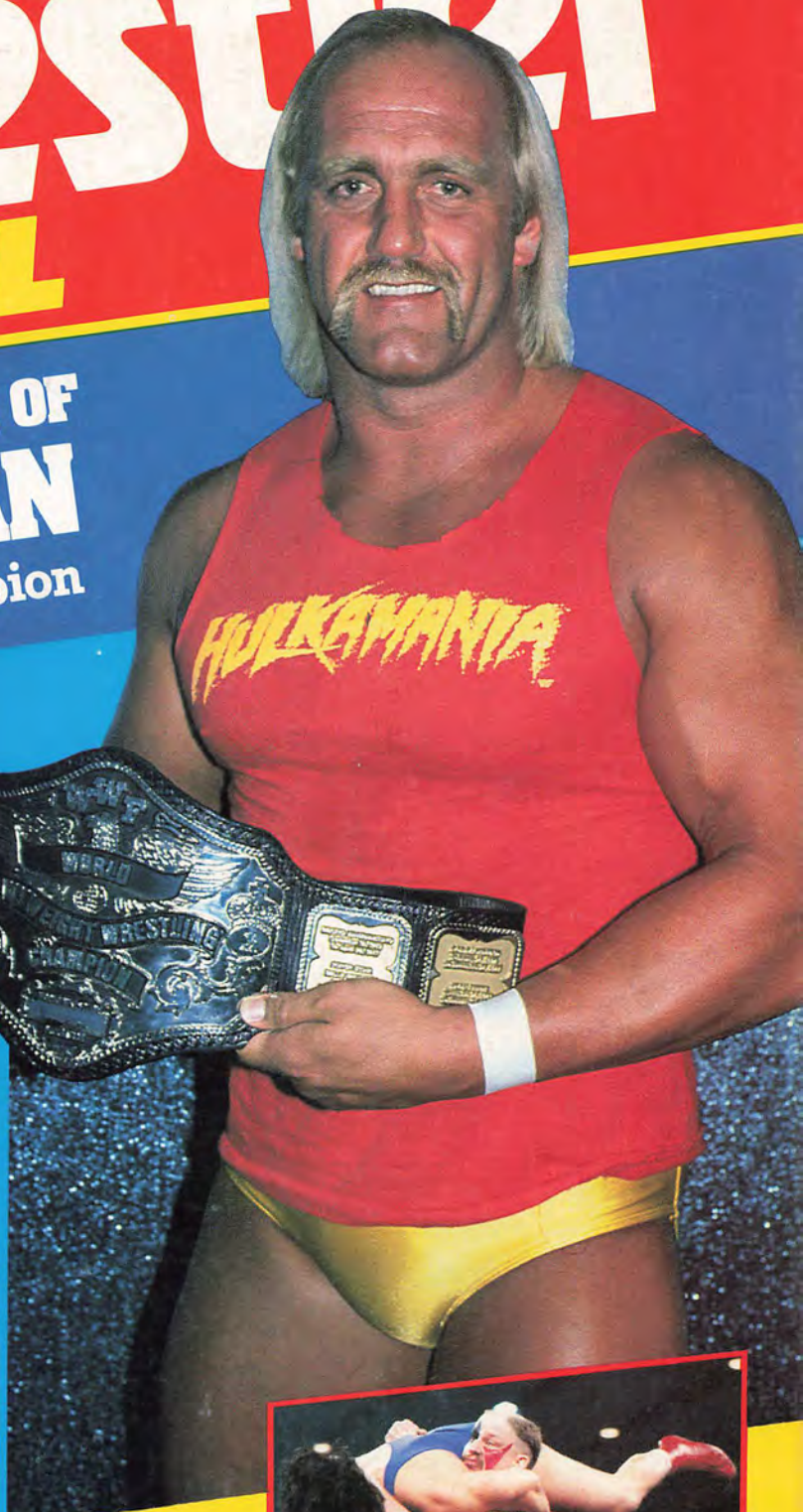
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Wrestler

ANNUAL

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Has What It Takes To Be
World Champion...**ALMOST!**"

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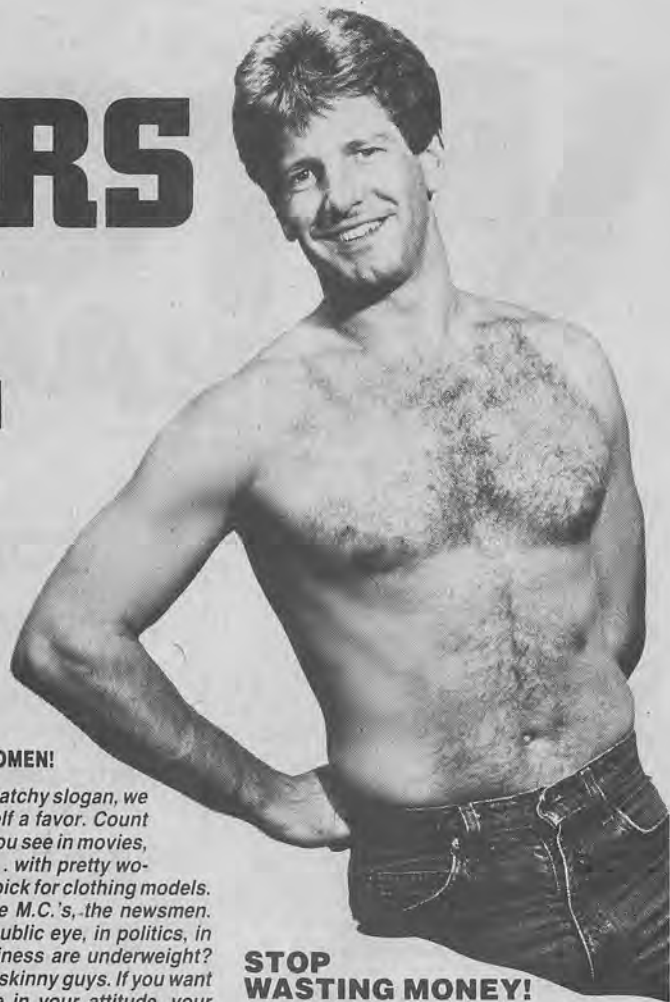


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GAIN WEIGHT! GAIN WOMEN!

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I MEAN REALLY *TOUGH!*

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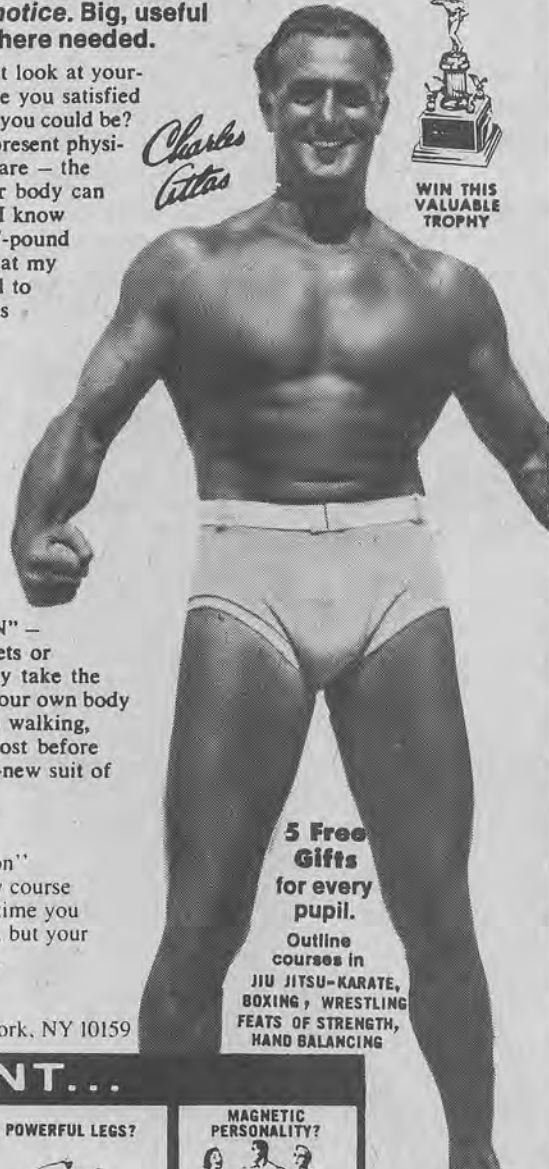
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INTRODUCTION

IT MAY BE cold outside, but the action inside this magazine is hot indeed. Welcome to the Spring 1986 edition of *Wrestler Annual*, presenting the best of some recent and not-so-recent articles from *The Wrestler*, the world's longest-running wrestling magazine.

Our first story is interesting mainly because of the unparalleled success of its subject. First, a little sidelight. One of the most popular features in

The Wrestler is a monthly feature called "Introducing." In it, the editors look at a young man who they believe has the potential to become a star someday. The key word here is "someday." In fact, 75 percent of the wrestlers profiled in "Introducing" never make it to main-event matches. Of the few that do make it, the average time spent in prelims is 4½ years. But **Introducing Nikita Koloff** (from *The Wrestler*/December

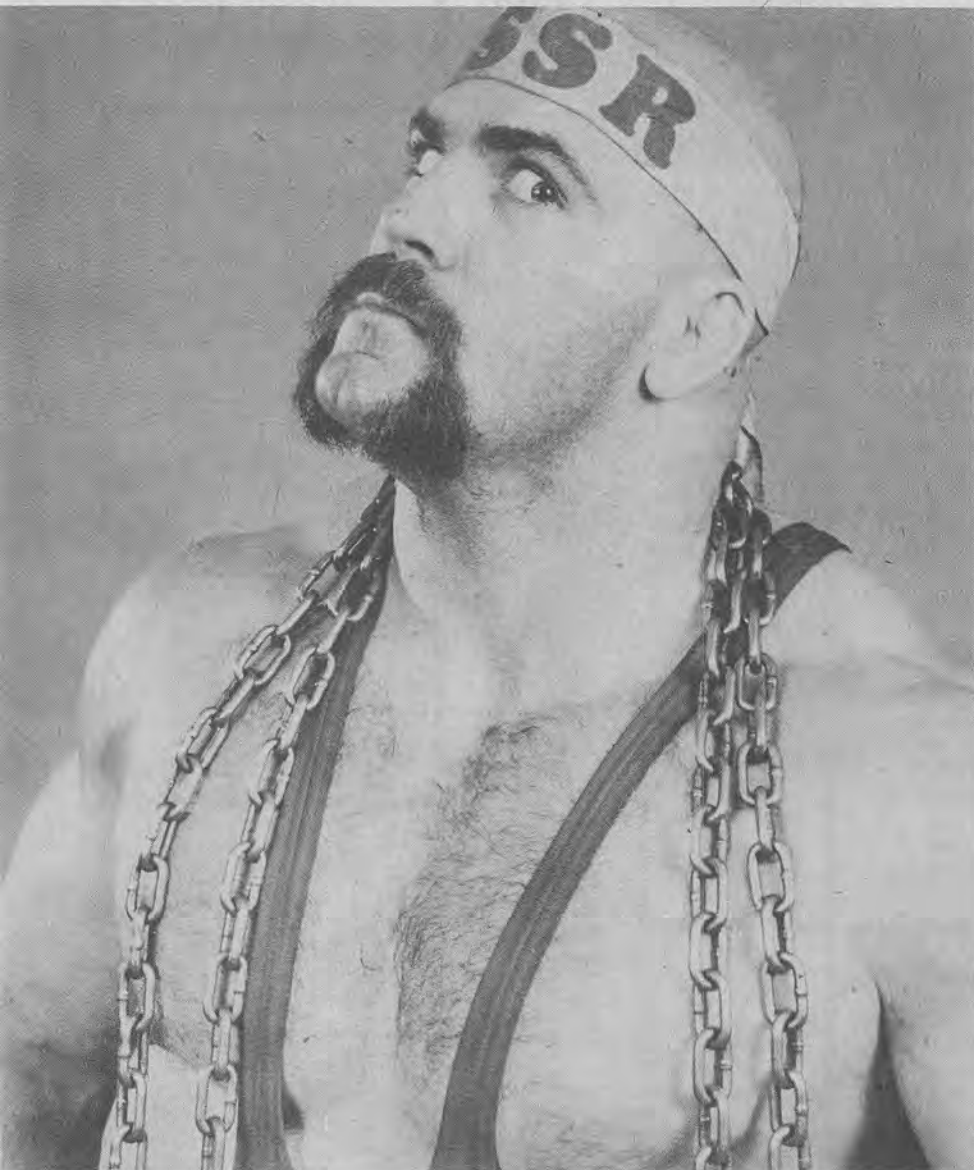
1984) brought you a man who skyrocketed to main-event matches—and very nearly the NWA title—in less than a year. Read again what the editors said about him at the very beginning.

Early in his career, Buzz Sawyer was considered a wrestler with enormous talent. But, for some strange reason, he always did his best in an arena and not on television. The off-beat story **Buzz Sawyer: The Man Who's Terrified To Wrestle On TV** (July/1982) is one of our most fondly remembered articles.

Before he came to the WWF, Jimmy Hart was a successful manager in the Mid-Southern area. But even then, "The Mouth Of The South" was known to make some tactical blunders. For instance, signing one of his charges into a deadly match in which a scaffold is suspended high above the ring. **Terror In Mid-Air: Wrestling's First Scaffold Match** (November/1982) takes you ringside to a bout where the contestants were literally in danger of falling to their deaths. By the way, this bout was also one of wrestling's *last* scaffold matches, as every major commission and federation has since put a bylaw in their charters banning this type of encounter.

Nick Bockwinkel is a rulebreaker who has the skills to compete in a strictly scientific amateur tournament. Dino Bravo is well-known for his knowledge of maneuvers, counter-maneuvers, and counter-counter-maneuvers. Yet both men can also brawl with the most vicious of opponents. When the two met in the ring, it was strictly skill vs. skill, and the fans were awed by this spectacle of wrestling science. **Nick Bockwinkel vs. Dino Bravo: Magnificence In Montreal** (June 1984) takes

(Continued on page 54)



Nikita Koloff has risen from rookie to top contender for the NWA title in record time. *The Wrestler* recognized Koloff's ability very early, and profiled him in an "Introducing" feature in the December 1984 issue.

Aerobie

Holds World Record For Longest Throw.

MIT Scientist: "When Frisbee dreams, it dreams it's an Aerobie!" Thrown 1046 feet in January, 1985. Can you beat it? Flies over twice as far as longest ever Frisbee throw. Most people quickly find that they can throw Aerobie 100 to 200 yards with surprising ease. Developed by high tech scientist. Constructed of resilient plastic and soft rubber, making it easy to catch. 1 1/2" diameter, 4 oz.

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INTRODUCING NIKITA KOLOFF



NIKITA KOLOFF KNELT in front of a padded bench, his arms outstretched and his palms facing up. In each hand was a 40-pound dumbbell. The sweat poured from his forehead as he curled his wrists toward the ceiling, and then back down.

"Fourteen, 15, 16, 17 . . ." He exhaled audibly after each count,

straining to complete 20 repetitions. As he attempted the 20th and final rep, the dumbbell in his left hand slipped from his grasp.

Ivan Koloff, Nikita's uncle, stopped his count and began barking what seemed to be a reprimand. He spoke quickly and loudly in his native Russian. The two communicate only in Russian,

and besides, Nikita's English is poor at best. Ivan's raspy baritone echoed off the walls of the gym. Nikita sat there motionless, accepting his punishment quietly.

The elder Koloff would not reveal what he said to his nephew. "Not for American ears," he said. "Personal. None of your business."

He returned to Nikita, whose forearm muscles bulged like Pop-eye's. He took each arm separately and rolled them between his hands. "Soreness is buildup of lactic acid," Ivan said. "Massage, heat, whirlpool will help." He turned to his nephew and barked, "Squats."

Ivan's NWA World tag team partner, Don Kernodle, watched the training session from a stool in the corner of the gym. "He's doing a lot of forearm work. The harder those forearms are, the more effective the cobra clutch is. That forearm presses right into the carotid artery."

Kernodle is Nikita's manager of record, but he leaves the training to Uncle Ivan. "The Soviets are so far advanced in training methods," Kernodle said. "Their workouts are so much more intense. That's why you see Russians dominating the athletic world. If they had come to the Olympics, there's no doubt that America would have suffered."

Nikita was one of the Russians who suffered because his country did not attend the 23rd Olympiad in Los Angeles. When the Soviet Union boycotted the Games, Nikita, who was entered in an unprecedented combination of

(Continued on page 10)

Nikita Koloff is one of the most impressive rookies to enter the pro ranks in years. The 6'2", 275-pound nephew of Ivan Koloff has displayed awesome strength and a sound understanding of the sport's basics. Experts speculate that this would-be Olympian can become one of the most dangerous competitors the sport has ever seen

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AFTER 24 HOURS

- Chance of heart attack decreases

AFTER 48 HOURS

- Nerve endings start regrowing
- Ability to smell and taste things is enhanced

AFTER 72 HOURS

- Bronchial tubes relax, making breathing easier
- Lung capacity increases

WITHIN 2 WEEKS TO 3 MONTHS

- Circulation improves
- Walking becomes easier
- Lung function increases up to 30 percent

1 TO 9 MONTHS

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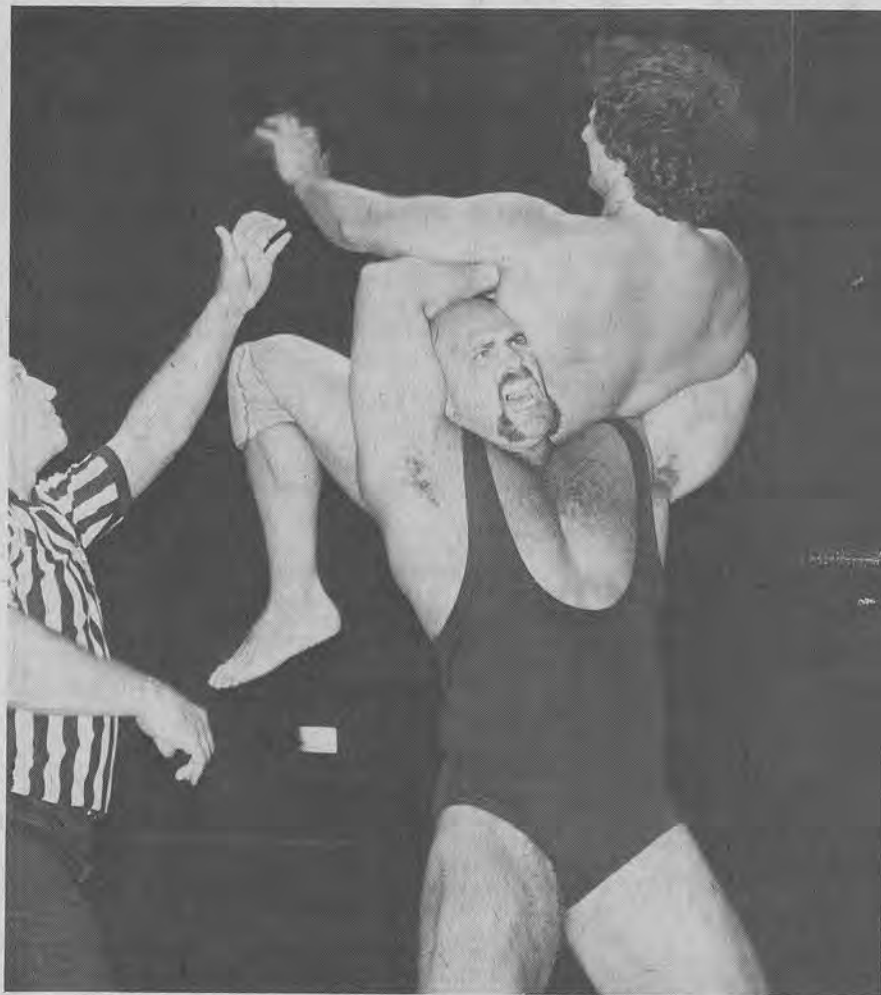
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INTRODUCING

(Continued from page 8)



Russia is superior to their country in every way.”

In a recent bout against Vinnie Valentino (who gave away three inches in height and 50 pounds to Koloff) the Russian dominated the action from the opening bell. He attacked Valentino's left arm and shoulder immediately, practically wrenching the arm from the rest of his body with armbars and hammerlocks. The pain weakened Valentino, who despite attempts to battle back could do nothing to improve his position. He was eventually forced to succumb to Koloff's backbreaker.

Other bouts have ended similarly. Opponent Gary Royal said that Koloff's hiptoss was enough to convince him that he was overmatched. "I thought I could at least retain some dignity and give it a good fight," Royal said, "but he wouldn't even leave me that. This guy is brutal."

These preliminary matches, Kernodle said, are providing Koloff with invaluable experience, but they are also leading to a challenge of the Mid-Atlantic heavyweight title. "The Mid-Atlantic title is a natural for Nikita," Kernodle said. "In fact, I would push for the match sooner, but Nikita and Ivan want to wait a little while.

"I feel that Nikita could handle a title shot right now, but by nature the Russian people are perfectionists. They don't like to fail. So if it means a few more wrestlers get the crap beat out of them on the way to Nikita's first championship, it really doesn't matter much. The Russian people are also very perseverant. He'll win that title. He'll get the job done."

On the other side of the gym, Nikita performed deep squats with a 450-pound barbell resting on his shoulders as his uncle counted the reps. "Yeah," Kernodle said, "he'll get the job done." □

events—wrestling, weightlifting, and the hammer throw—had the choice of holding on to his amateur status for another four years until the 1988 Games, or becoming a professional wrestler.

"Since he was a child in Russia," Kernodle explained, "he has been hearing about his uncle's success in America. Ivan is a hero there because he is a representative of Russia's superiority over the U.S.

"Nikita told Ivan that since he began wrestling as an amateur, his dream was to come to America and wrestle with his uncle," Kernodle continued. "He couldn't wait until after 1988."

Turning pro, however, would mean that Koloff would have to give up his chance to attain the most unusual gold medal triple in Olympic history. "Nikita would

Nikita Koloff, an intense and determined young man, defeats Vinny Valentino with a Russian backbreaker.

have loved the challenge, but it just wasn't possible," Kernodle said. "As soon as he made his decision, he contacted his uncle, and with my help, we got him to America."

The Soviet Union is not in the habit of letting its best athletes just leave the country. Just how Kernodle was able to bring Koloff to the United States is a mystery. "I have my connections," was all he would say.

Through his uncle's interpretation, Nikita expressed his immediate goals. "It is very important to Nikita that he wins matches and eventually wins titles," Ivan said. "But most important to him is to show the American people that

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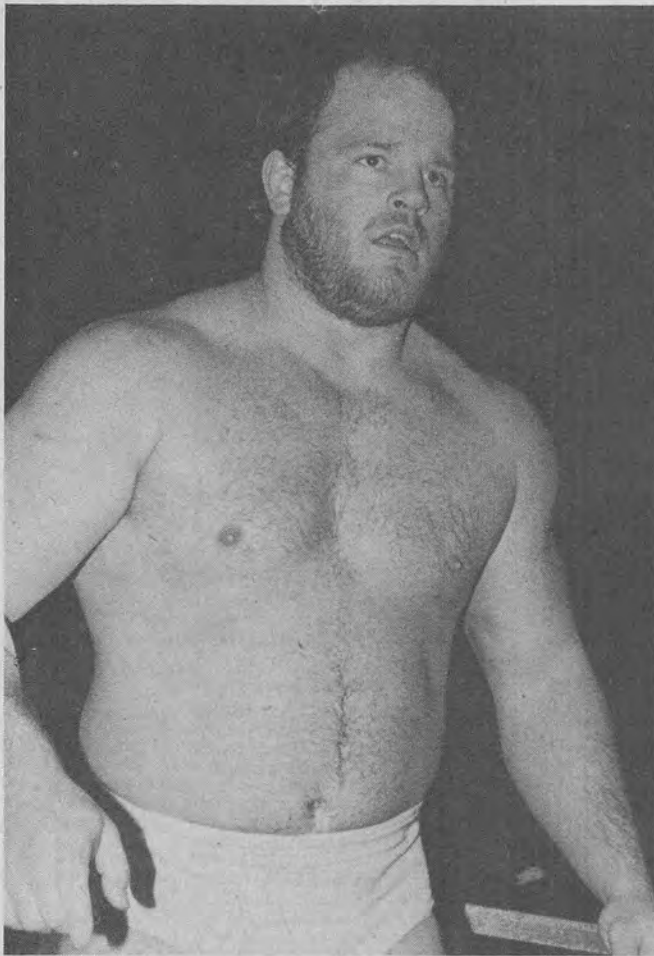
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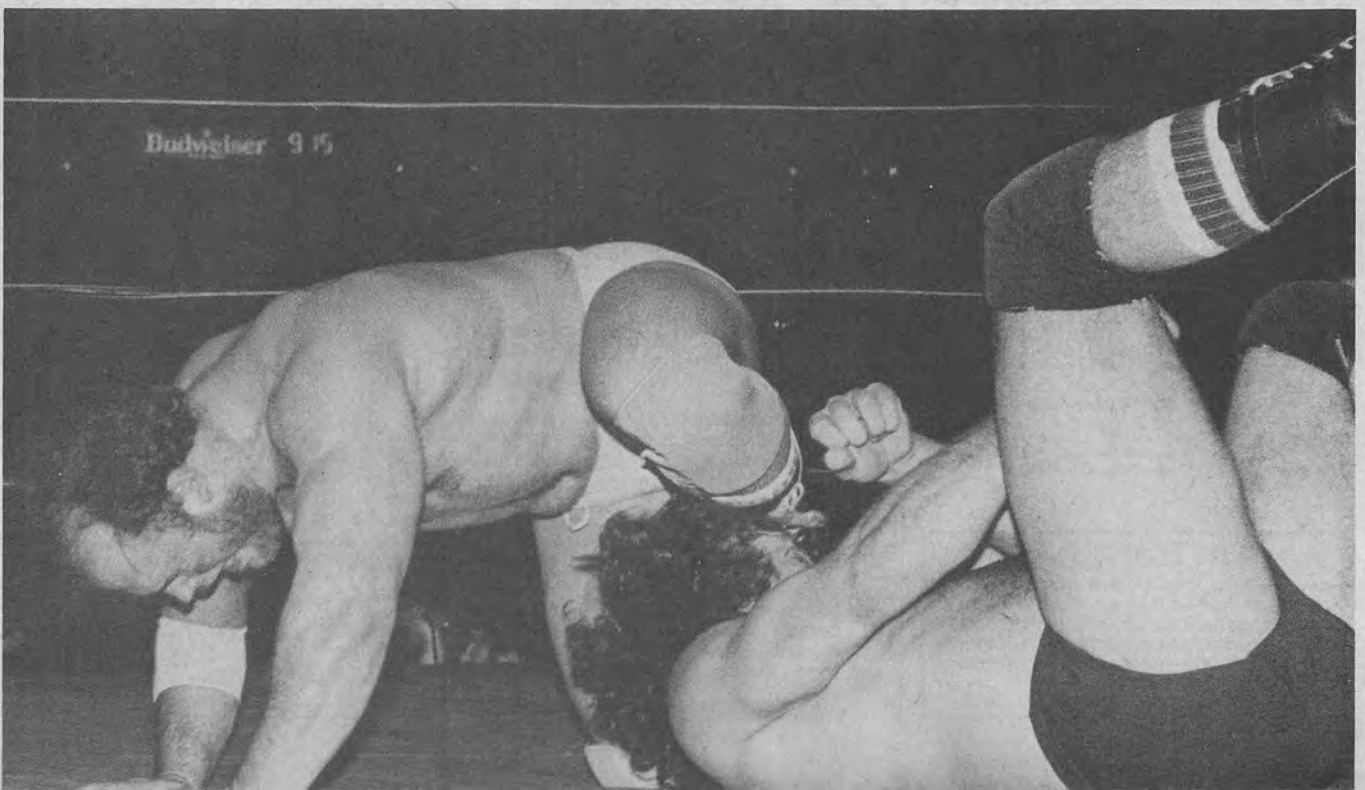
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BUZZ PHOTOS BY EMMY YATES **SAWYER**

Nobody can explain it: In an arena, Buzz Sawyer is a powerhouse. On television, he's a dud. Drawing from his own experiences, crack editor Steve Farhood uncovers the possible conflict that may be the cause of Sawyer's Jekyll-Hyde career

THE MAN WHO'S TERRIFIED TO WRESTLE ON TV



POOR BUZZ SAWYER. He's going through a terrible time right now, and the fans are split in their opinion of him.

Those fans who see him wrestle in person are fully convinced of his abilities. They see Sawyer as a future champion on the rise, a man with a lot of ability who only needs to get some years and experience behind him before he rises to the very top of the sport.

But anyone who has only seen him on television thinks that Sawyer is lacking something, that he can only win by cheating. They think that every time he faces a top-caliber opponent, Sawyer will lose.

Unfortunately, both points of view have their elements of truth about them.

"I never get main event matches on television!" complained Sawyer for about

as long as I can remember. His feud with Jim Garvin was taking up most of his time, and Sawyer was looking for a public forum in which to humiliate the man.

Well, it wasn't long before a television match between Sawyer and Garvin was set up, and wouldn't you know it? Sawyer didn't look sharp and lost the match.

The paradox of the situation, though, is that when I saw Buzz in a return match with Garvin at the Omni recently, he damn near destroyed Garvin. Okay, so some of you Garvin fans might not like the word "destroyed." But let's face facts, okay? There is no doubt in my mind, or in the minds of anyone else I spoke to that night, that Buzz Sawyer overpowered Jim Garvin *extensively*. No doubt.

Yet the question remains: Why is he such a zero when faced with the prospect of having to wrestle on television?

I think I have the answer.

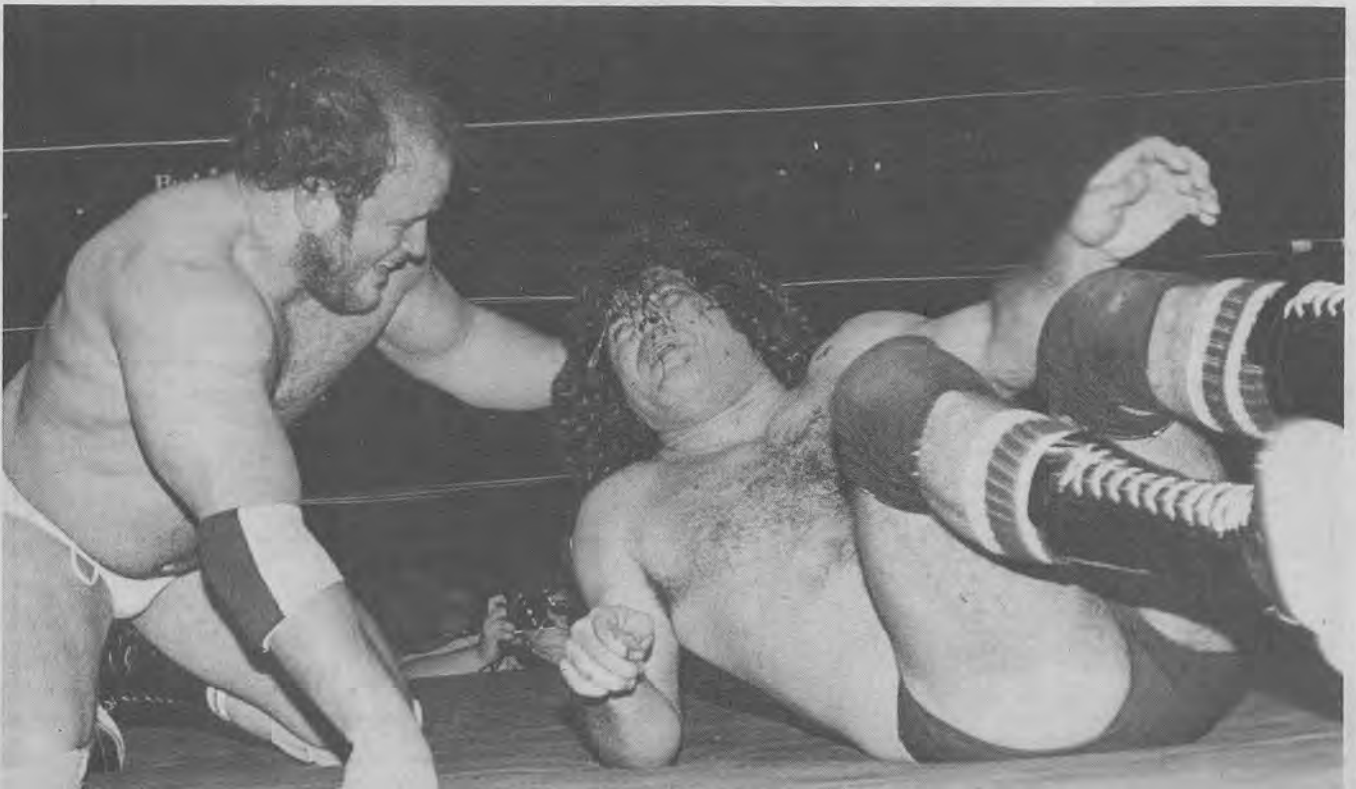
Back when I was in high school, or maybe it was junior high . . . it was so long ago, I can't even remember which. Anyway, some of my friends were in the drama club and were putting on a production of *Guys and Dolls*, based on the Damon Runyon story of the same name.

Now this was in an auditorium in school that held about 1,500 people, and there wasn't any television involved. But I have to admit, I was scared spitless when the time came that I had to go out on that stage, roll a pair of dice (which, I must say, I did with considerable flair and grace), and say my few words of dialogue.

Stage fright. It's a horrible thing. Cold sweat beads up on your forehead, all mental functions cease, particularly those that govern memory and

(Continued on page 52)

Anybody who viewed the Sawyer-Garvin television match would find it hard to believe what transpired in the rematch at the Omni. Sawyer, in complete control, drops a knee across Garvin's face (opposite bottom), opening a cut on the bridge of Jim's nose (below).



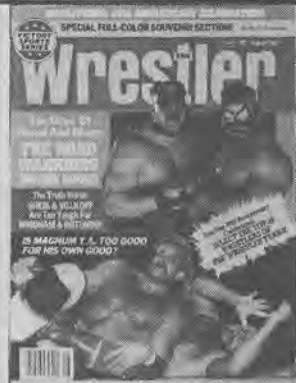
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THE Wrestler

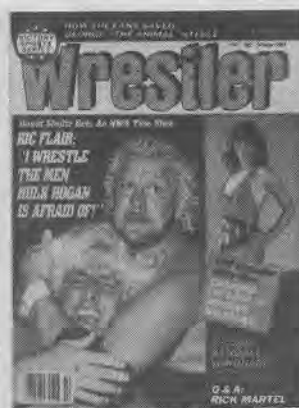
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June 1975/Stories include: Andre, Muraco, Funk, Lawler.
July 1975/Stories include: Valentine, Sammartino, Race, Rhodes.
August 1975/Stories include: Sammartino, Patterson, Stasiak, Rivera.
December 1975/Stories include: Mascaras, Rhodes, McDaniel, Blackjacks.
January 1976/Stories include: Sammartino, Putski, Wrestling II, Rhodes.
February 1976/Stories include: Andre, Sammartino, Rhodes, Valentine.
July 1976/Stories include: Andre, Wrestling II, Inoki, Von Erich.
November 1976/Stories include: Sammartino, Andre, Valentine, Mosca.
December 1976/Stories include: Von Erich, Mulligan, Brody, Funk.
January 1977/Stories include: Brody, Andre, Wrestling II, Mascaras.
February 1977/Stories include: Sammartino, Jones, Funk, Von Raschke.
April 1977/Stories include: Sammartino, Funk, Flair, Bockwinkel.
May 1977/Stories include: Mascaras, Valiants, Andersons, Sammartino.
June 1977/Stories include: Patera, Putski, Hernandez, McDaniel.
July 1977/Stories include: Backlund, Rhodes, Rocca, Mascaras.
October 1977/Stories include: Rhodes, Sammartino, Flair, Snuka.
November 1977/Stories include: Sammartino, Slater, Mascaras, Snuka.
September 1978/Stories include: Rhodes, Grahams, Andre, Mascaras.
October 1978/Stories include: Sammartino, Backlund, McDaniel, Race.
November 1978/Stories include: Flair, Andre, Ladd, Graham.
December 1978/Stories include: Brisco, Mulligan, Andre, Blanchard.
February 1979/Stories include: Ladd, Flair, Idol, Heenan.



AUGUST 1985

May 1979/Stories include: Steamboat, Brody, Valiants, Race.
July 1979/Stories include: Wrestling II, Backlund, Sammartino, Andre.
August 1979/Stories include: Bockwinkel, Patera, Stevens, Superstar.
October 1979/Stories include: Flair, Valentine, Santana, Muraco.
December 1979/Stories include: Andre, Graham, Rhodes, Mascaras.
January 1980/Stories include: Race, Backlund, Snuka, Brisco.
February 1980/Stories include: Andre, Flair, DiBiase, Superstar.
March 1980/Stories include: Sammartino, Murdoch, Mulligan, Andre.
April 1980/Stories include: Rhodes, DiBiase, Youngblood, Wrestling II.
May 1980/Stories include: Andre, Mascaras, Bockwinkel, Patera.
June 1980/Stories include: Backlund, Abdullah, Brisco, Flair.
August 1980/Stories include: Valentine, Zbyszko, Von Erich, Albano.
September 1980/Stories include: Ladd, Patera, Steamboat, Gagne.
October 1980/Stories include: Patera, Rhodes, Wrestling II, Morales.



OCTOBER 1985

November 1980/Stories include: Rich, Hogan, Snuka, Super Destroyers.
January 1981/Stories include: Valentine, Rhodes, Patra, Von Erich.
February 1981/Stories include: Zbyszko, Patera, Iron Sheik, Wrestling II.
March 1981/Stories include: Rich, Samoans, Blassie, Wrestling II.
May 1981/Stories include: Backlund, Rhodes, DiBiase, Moondogs.
June 1981/Stories include: Sammartino, Piper, Rich, Martel.
July 1981/Stories include: Backlund, Rhodes, Flair, Atlas.
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October 1981/Stories include: Funks, Rhodes, Race, Sullivan.
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January 1982/Stories include: Rich, Steamboat, Sullivan, Sammartino.
March 1982/Stories include: Slaughter, Albano, Flair, Race.
April 1982/Stories include: Brisco, Armstrongs, Valentine, Santana.
May 1982/Stories include: Backlund, Von Erich, Graham, Rich.
June 1982/Stories include: Steamboat, Reed, Albano, Piper.
July 1982/Stories include: Rich, Sawyer, Flair, Steamboat.
August 1982/Stories include: Bockwinkel, Steamboat, Mulligans, Piper.
September 1982/Stories include: Rhodes, Hogan, Armstrong, Blair.
October 1982/Stories include: Snuka, Rhodes, Santana, Piper.
November 1982/Stories include: Flair, Snuka, Piper, Blair.
December 1982/Stories include: Snuka, Rich, Kamala, Junkyard Dog.
January 1983/Stories include: Putski, Muraco, Windham, Bockwinkel.
February 1983/Stories include: Bockwinkel, Backlund, Rich, Kamala.
March 1983/Stories include: Piper, Reed, Valiant, Roberts.
April 1983/Stories include: Rhodes, Tiger Mask, Sammartino, Bundy.

May 1983/Stories include: Samoans, Von Erich, Rhodes, Orndorff.
June 1983/Stories include: Windham, Martel, Brody, Andre.
July 1983/Stories include: Flair, Adonis, Sullivan, Zbyszko.
August 1983/Stories include: Valentine, Blanchard, Windham, Street.
September 1983/Stories include: Hogan, Ellering, Von Erich, Briscos.
October 1983/Stories include: Race, Sawyer, Briscos, Bass.
November 1983/Stories include: Rhodes, Santana, Von Erichs, Kabuki.
December 1983/Stories include: Mascaras, Superstar, Von Erich, Zbyszko.
January 1984/Stories include: Valentine, Hogan, Von Erich, Road Warriors.
March 1984/Stories include: Santana, Hogan, Von Erich, Sawyers.
April 1984/Stories include: Hogan, Ellering, Von Erich, Rhodes.
May 1984/Stories include: Windham, Brody, Road Warriors, Junkyard Dog.
June 1984/Stories include: Von Erich, Billy Jack, Flair, Armstrong.
July 1984/Stories include: Rich, Billy Jack, Valiant, Von Erich.
August 1984/Stories include: Garvin, Sullivan, Freebirds, Street.
September 1984/Stories include: Von Erich, Piper, Steamboat, Billy Jack.
October 1984/Stories include: Flair, Rhodes, Magnum T.A., Bundy.
November 1984/Stories include: Billy Jack, Von Erich, Piper, Brody.
December 1984/Stories include: Martel, Santana, Von Erich, Steamboat.
January 1985/Stories include: Von Erich, Warriors, Albano, Koloffs.
February 1985/Stories include: Warriors, Santana, Billy Jack, Nikita Koloff.
March 1985/Stories include: Slaughter, Warriors, Martel, Rude.
April 1985/Stories include: Warriors, Von Erich-Adams, Flair, Tonga & Snuka.
May 1985/Stories include: Warriors, Backlund, Santana, Rich.
June 1985/Stories include: Rhodes, Windham, Rich, Hogan.
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August 1985/BONUS 4-PG. COLOR SECTION! Plus: Warriors, Magnum T.A., Sheik & Volkoff, McGraw.
September 1985/Stories include: Hogan, Von Erich, Savage, R&R Express.
October 1985/Stories include: Flair, Windham, Shultz, Martel.
November 1985/Stories include: Hogan, Zbyszko, R&R Express, Von Erichs.
December 1985/Stories include: Rude, Fantastics, Muraco, Uncle Elmer.
January 1986/Stories include: 20th Anniversary, 10 Greatest Wrestlers, Rhodes, Hogan, Sammartino
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THE WRESTLER

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January 1977/Stories include: Sammartino, Brisco, Funk, Gagne.
February 1977/Stories include: Andre, Funk, Sammartino, Gagne.
May 1977/Stories include: Sammartino, Putski, Sheik, Race.
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March 1978/Stories include: Rhodes, Valentine, Backlund, Bockwinkel.
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November 1978/Stories include: Rhodes, Backlund, Flair, Steamboat.
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January 1979/Stories include: Sammartino, Mulligan, Rhodes, Backlund.
February 1979/Stories include: Race, Sammartino, Steamboat, Ladd.
April 1979/Stories include: Andre, Flair, Backlund, Jones.
May 1979/Stories include: Steamboat, Rhodes, Backlund, Heenan.
June 1979/Stories include: Rhodes, Superstar, Bockwinkel, Backlund.
July 1979/Stories include: Rhodes, Ladd, Valiant, Brower.
August 1979/Stories include: Flair, Garvin, Race, Sammartino.
September 1979/Stories include: Steamboat, Mascaras, Strongbow, Garvin.
October 1979/Stories include: Rich, Rhodes, Backlund, Putski.
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March 1980/Stories include: Flair, Rich, Funk, Duncum.
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April 1981/Stories include: Albano, Sammartino Jr., Race, McGraw.
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October 1985/Stories include: Russian menace, Von Erichs, Rude & Barr.
November 1985/Stories include: Steamboat, Adams, Freebirds, Cornette.
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OCTOBER 1985

October 1982/Stories include: Rich, Andre, Piper, Dillon.
November 1982/Stories include: Flair, Snuka, Von Erich, Slaughter.
December 1982/Stories include: Mulligan, Rich, Lawler, Grand Wizard.
February 1983/Stories include: Rhodes, Hogan, DiBiase, Race.
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INSIDE WRESTLING

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All this and much more . . .
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Inside

Wrestling



A special preview and analysis of the impending war between **THE ROAD WARRIORS** and **THE KOLOFFS & KHRUSHCHEV**



Will the reunion between **BARRY WINDHAM** and **MIKE ROTUNDO** spell disaster for **KENDALL WINDHAM?**

PLUS . . .

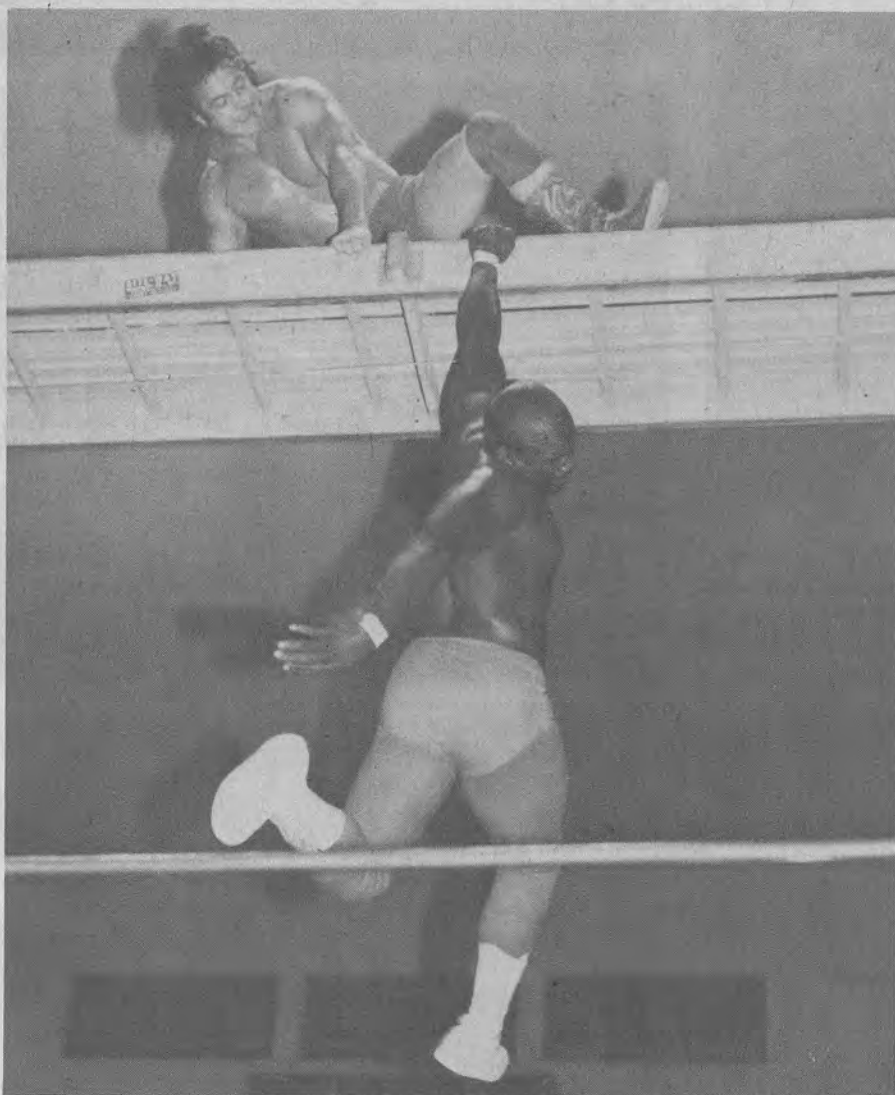
RICK RUDE: A star ready to shine—or explode . . . A special "Hotseat" interview with **JERRY LAWLER** . . . Find out why **HILLBILLY JIM'S** return is getting in **JOHN STUDD'S** hair . . . **MICHAEL HAYES** and **KERRY VON ERICH** face off "One on One" . . .

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**Terror
In Mid-Air**

WRESTLING'S FIRST SCAFFOLD MATCH



KOKO WARE'S EYES widened in amazement as his manager, Jimmy Hart, repeated what he had just said.

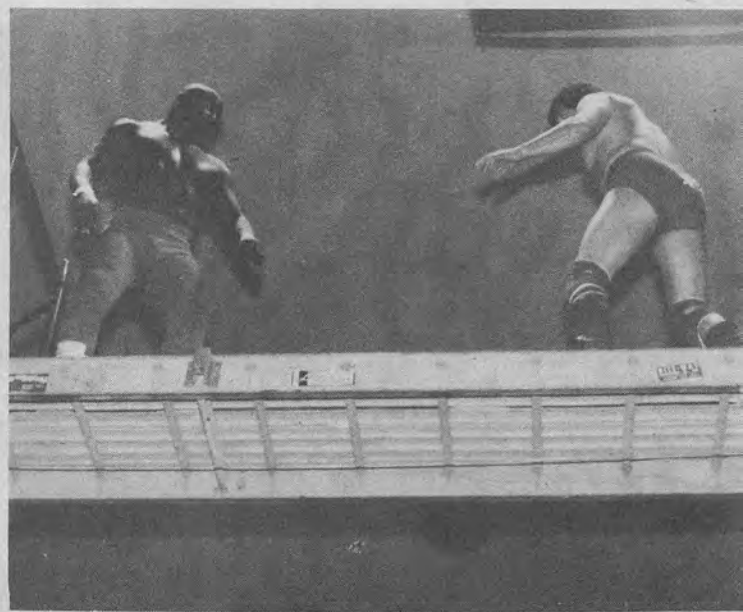
"That's right, a *Scaffold Match*," said Hart. "The challenge came from Bill Dundee this morning. It seems he's been bothered by me, and he wants to keep me from interfering in any more matches between you and him. He thinks a Scaffold Match is the answer."

"What the hell is a Scaffold Match?" Koko Ware asked.

"Well, the contract stipulates that a two-foot-wide scaffold will be constructed 14½ feet above the floor of the ring," Hart explained. "The match will take place on that two-foot-wide piece of wood, steel, or whatever material is available. If a man is knocked off the scaffold and falls to the ring below, he's got

Dangling by one hand from the scaffold, Koko Ware knows the only thing that separates him from defeat is a 14½-foot drop to the canvas. Koko would suffer more than a broken wrist; his damaged ego cannot be repaired.

More dangerous than a Texas Death Match. More violent than a Brass Knuckles Street Match. More potential for injury than a Barbed Wire Cage Match. It's a Scaffold Match, and its unique and deadly rules would bring the feud between Koko Ware and Bill Dundee to new heights



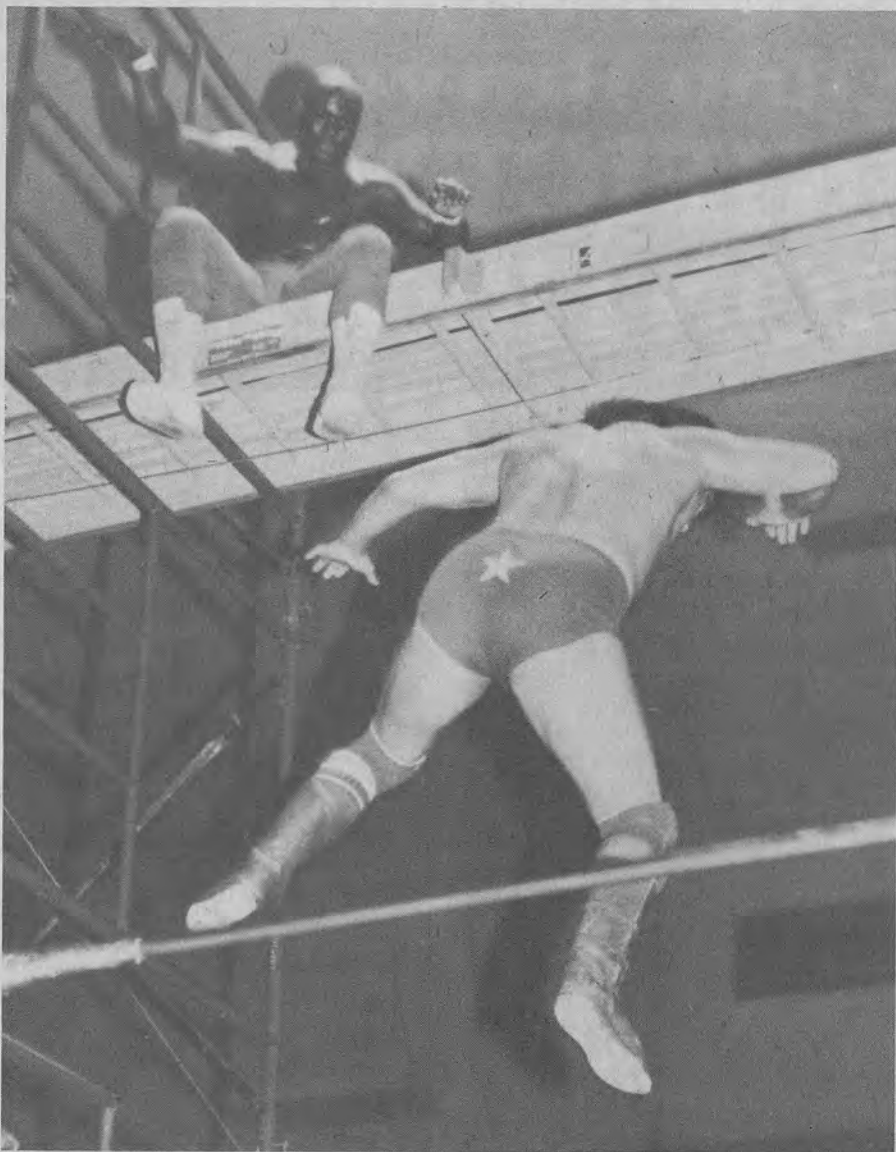
Above: Dundee glares at Ware as he climbs to meet him 14½ feet above the ring. Top right: Both men are very cautious early in the match. Right: Straddling the scaffold, Dundee tries to pull his opponent off-balance. Below: Ware holds on tightly as Dundee tries to push him off the scaffold with his feet.

a 20-count to climb back to the scaffold area. If he's knocked off twice, he loses the match."

Koko Ware sat in silence for a few minutes. He was contemplating the image of battling his arch-rival, Bill Dundee, on a two-foot-wide expanse of pure danger. It *would* be the opportunity of a lifetime to settle this feud, he thought. It would also be an extremely dangerous match. The first of its kind.

That's a part of the sport, Koko Ware thought. Danger. The man who takes the biggest risk is the man who stands to gain the most. At least that's the way it often is in professional wrestling, a sport that thrives on danger and risk.





Above: At the 16:28 mark, Dundee is the first man to fall from the scaffold. Below left: Dundee gains the advantage with an armtwist. Below right: A weakened Ware is down and about ready to go even further down.

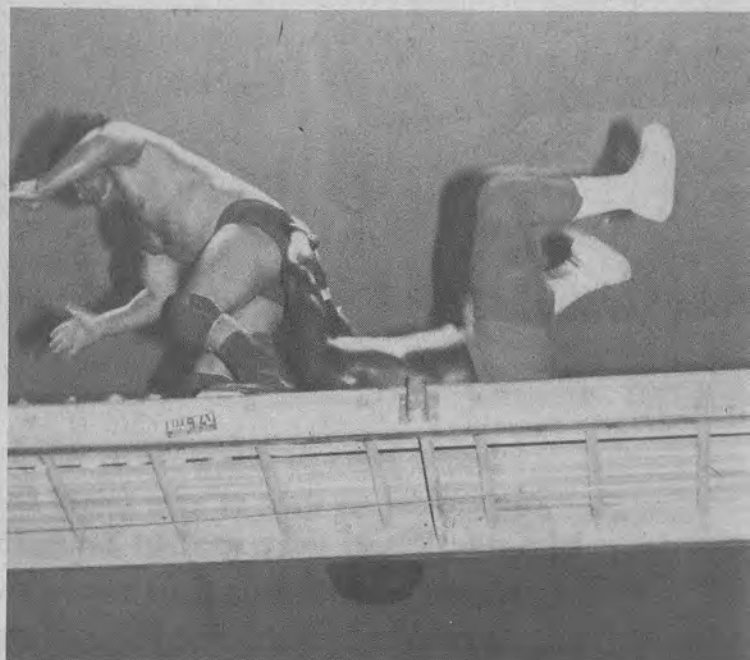
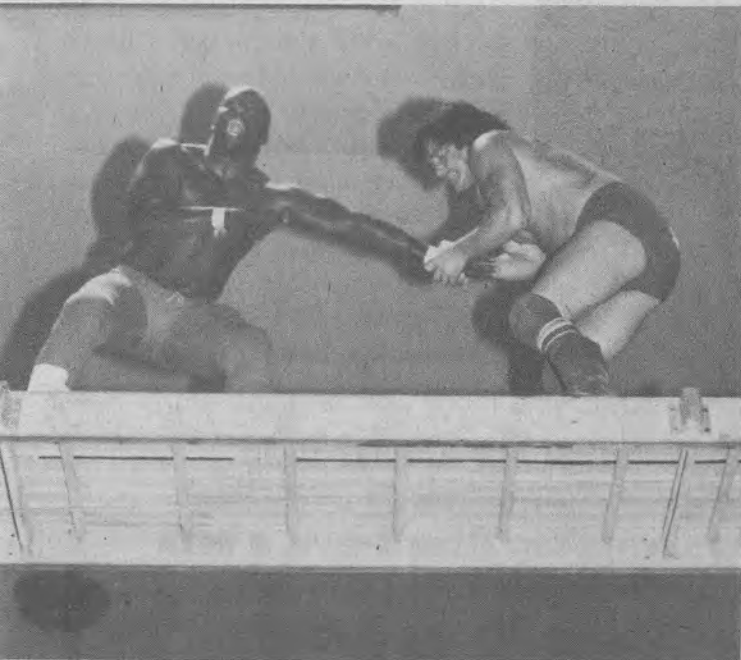
"Where do I sign?" Koko Ware asked his manager. Jimmy Hart simply handed him the contract and smiled.

The audience watched in awe as workmen constructed the scaffold rigging that would serve as the battlefield for Koko Ware and Bill Dundee. The buzz of anticipation was in the air. No one had ever seen a match like this before, and it wasn't likely that anyone there would ever have the opportunity to see such a confrontation again.

As Dundee and Ware emerged from their respective dressing rooms, they stared at the imposing structure that stood nearly 15 feet above the ring. They knew the risk, of course, but it was an all or nothing proposition. Pure pride was at stake, and only one man would walk back to his dressing room as the victor in a feud that had lasted longer than either man would ever have guessed.

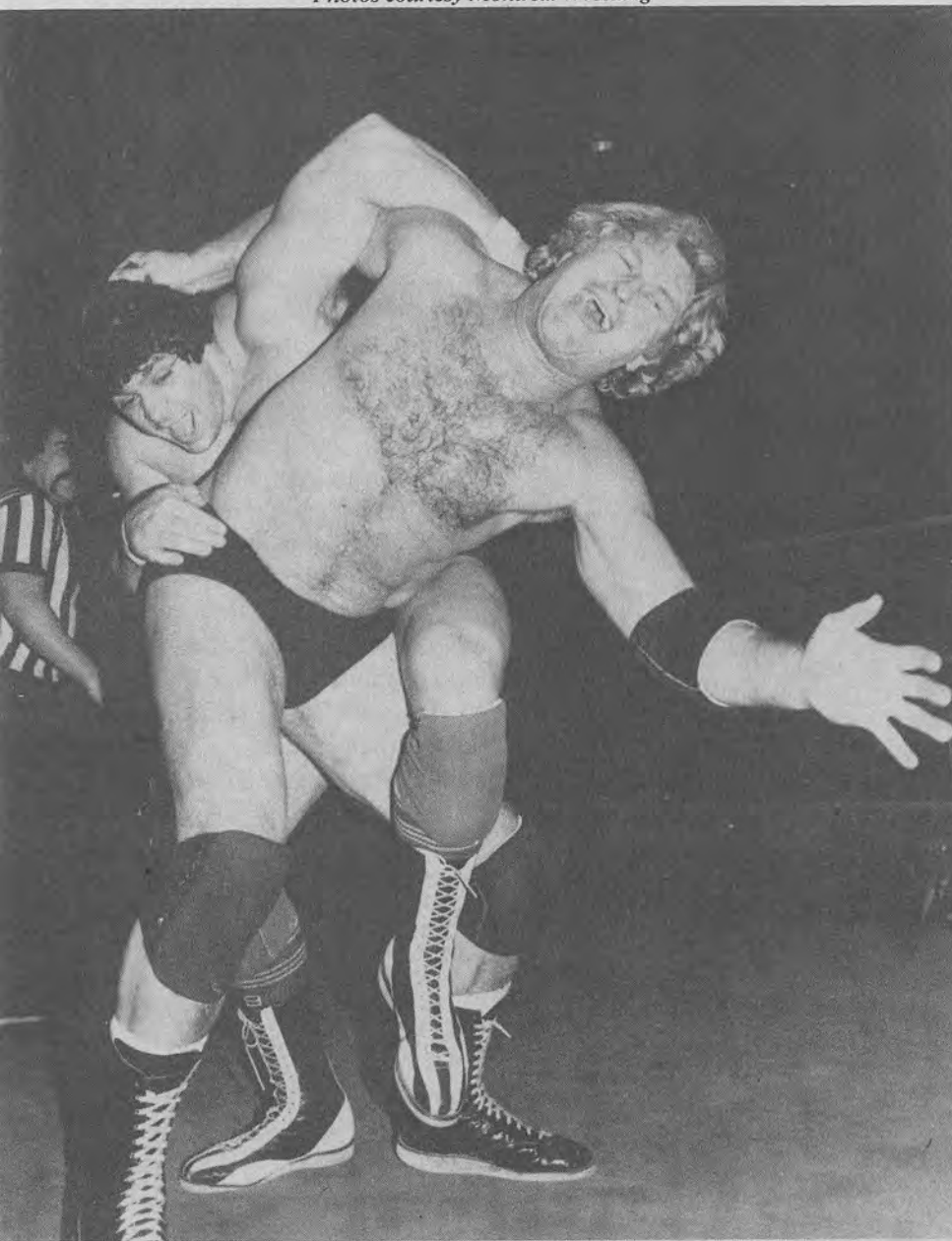
As both men stood atop the scaffold, it was clear that each was facing two enemies: the flesh and blood opponent in front of him, and the raw fear that coursed through their minds. Fear of what might happen on the scaffold itself,

(Continued on page 60)



Nick Bockwinkel vs. Dino Bravo: MAGNIFICENCE IN MONTREAL

Photos courtesy Montreal Wrestling



[Editor's note: Shortly after this story was filed, Nick Bockwinkel lost the AWA World title to Jumbo Tsuruta in Tokyo, Japan. For further details, see "What's Happening," on page 8.]

NO ONE HAS to tell a veteran athlete when he's getting stale. So when Bobby Heenan suggested Nick Bockwinkel watch a videotape of a recent match of Bockwinkel's, the wrestler said it wasn't necessary. There was nothing he wanted to see on it.

Bockwinkel had known for weeks what was happening. By concentrating on the two or three top contenders for his AWA belt, the champion had fallen into a rut. His tactics were becoming predictable and his execution sluggish. He was keeping his championship by lesser and lesser margins. If this kept up, he'd soon be depending on luck to see him through. Champions who depend on luck are quickly ex-champions.

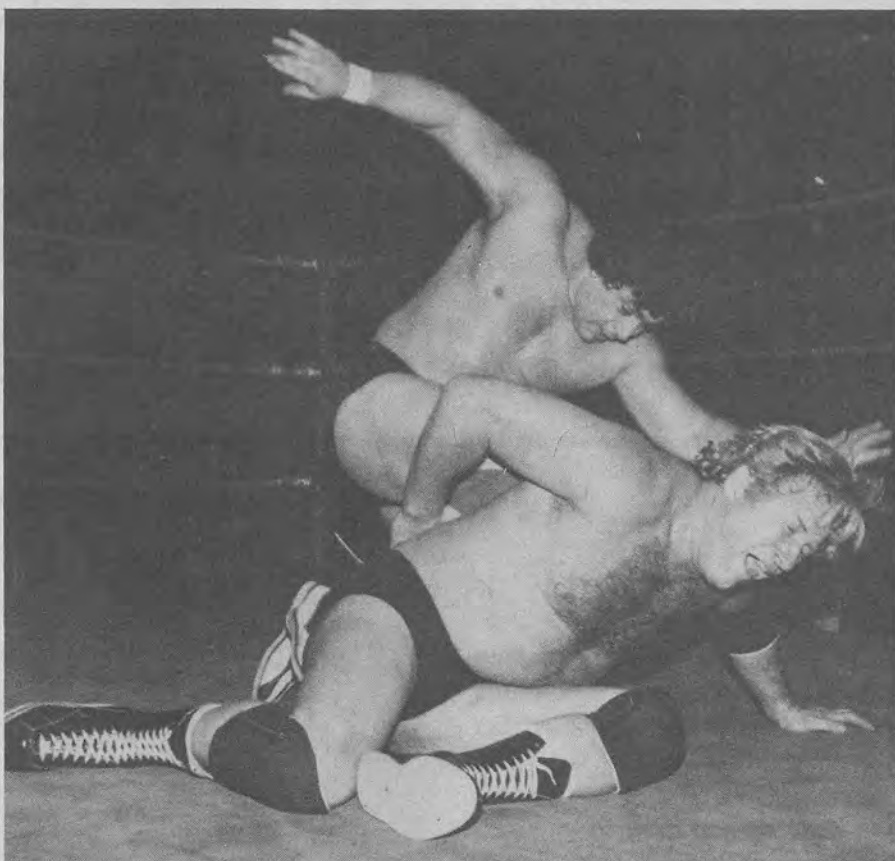
So Heenan, Bockwinkel's manager, never showed the videotape to the wrestler. Instead, he sat across from Bockwinkel in Nick's study and waited for Nick to say something. Bockwinkel stared straight across at his manager and intoned, "Dino Bravo."

Love him or hate him, Nick Bockwinkel has always been regarded as one of the most intelligent champions in wrestling history. Then why would he insist on wrestling Dino Bravo, a man whose style gives him more trouble than just about any other wrestler, when Bravo was not even a mandatory defense?

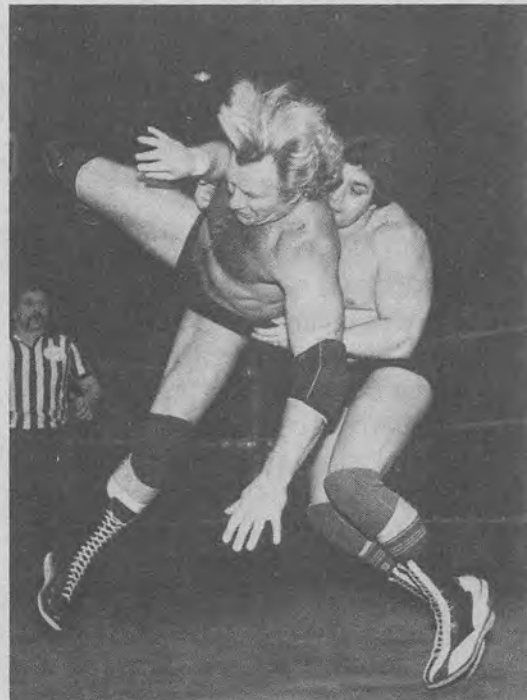
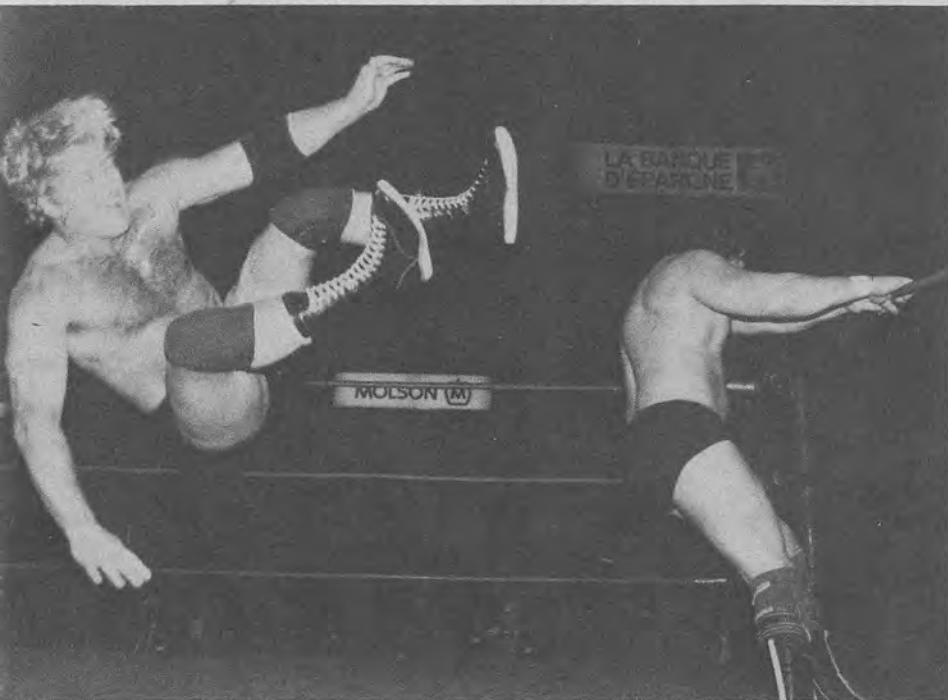
“Without saying anything, Heenan put a contract on Bockwinkel’s desk. It had Bravo’s signature already on it. As soon as Bockwinkel signed, the match would be officially scheduled for Montreal. Bockwinkel’s smile was so tight that it looked as if it hurt to move his facial muscles. He signed.

For Nick Bockwinkel, wrestling Dino Bravo is like taking distasteful medicine. It’s something Bockwinkel must do but wishes he didn’t have to. Dino pushes Bockwinkel to the champion’s limits. More than once Nick has escaped with his title barely intact. Several of those times Bravo might have become AWA champion if it weren’t for Heenan’s interference.

When Bockwinkel signs a match against Bravo, you can bet it’s because Nick needs to do it. He never wants to wrestle Bravo.



Dino Bravo plants a knee into Bockwinkel’s back (above). Dino avoids a Bockwinkel dropkick (below left) and scores a takedown (below right). Trapped in an abdominal stretch (opposite page), Bockwinkel must try to remember all the good that comes out of wrestling Bravo.



Bravo, of course, is always delighted to get a chance at Bockwinkel. Not only does Dino long for the AWA World heavyweight championship, but the sweetest part of all would be to take it from Bockwinkel. To see the tricky Bockwinkel suffer the sight of Dino

waving the AWA belt over his head would be Dino’s dream come true. Dino also knows the only reason Bockwinkel will wrestle him is for Nick to regain his championship edge. That makes Dino’s task harder than any other challenger’s.

The night of the match, Bock-

winkel looked better than he had in months. Every nerve was alive. Even in the dressing room he moved with the grace of a stalking animal. Never was a man so anxious and ready for combat. Heenan never looked happier.

(Continued on page 48)

RIC FLAIR: "BILLY JACK HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO BE WORLD CHAMPION...ALMOST!"

By Ric Flair

NOW I DON'T want to deflate all the hopes and dreams that you fans have for this kid Billy Jack. I know he's called "The People's Choice" for a reason, and that reason has to do with the fact that there probably isn't one of you fans who doesn't adore this musclebound rookie.

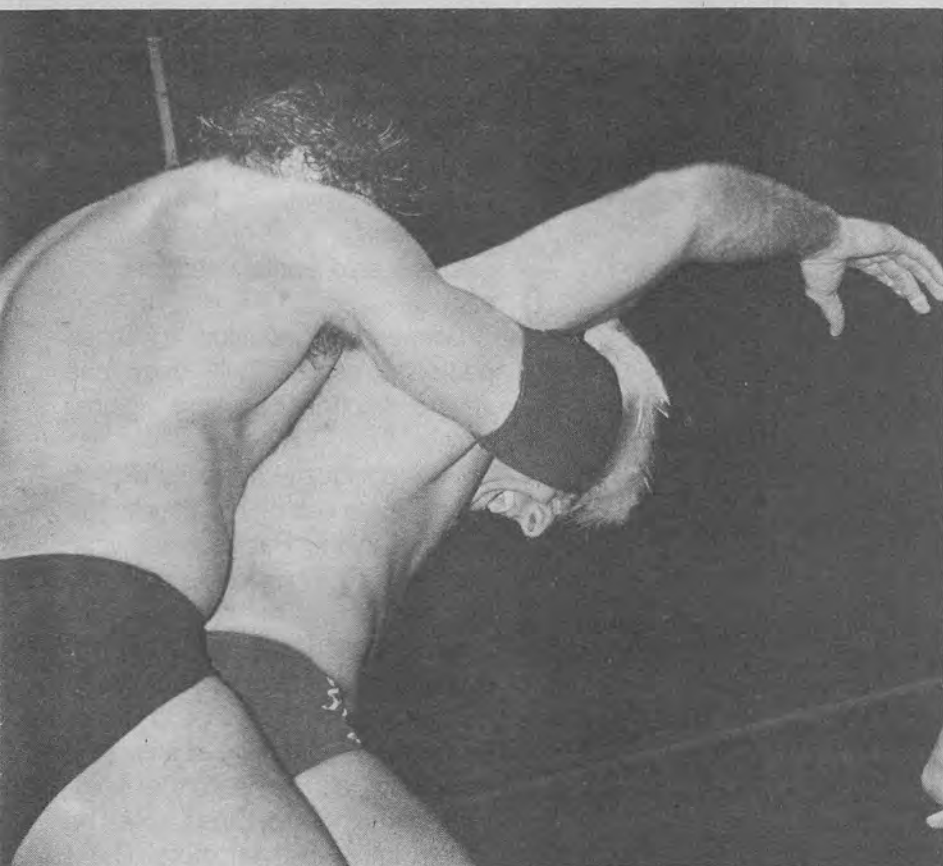
Well that's fine. But you'd better listen to the voice of experience when I say that Billy Jack will never win the NWA World title . . . at least not while those 10 pounds of gold are strapped around *my* waist.

But that's not to say that Billy Jack will *never* become NWA World champion. On the contrary, I'm willing to recognize the fact that Billy Jack has what it takes to be World champion . . . almost.

Because there are some shortcomings in Billy Jack that have cost him dearly. And as three-time NWA World champion, as the greatest wrestler in the world today, I'm going to offer my own experience and knowledge and tell you, the readers of this maga-



Most of the fans who have seen Billy Jack's title matches with NWA World champion Ric Flair agree: "The People's Choice" will one day be champion of the world. But as you read Ric Flair's own analysis of Billy Jack, you'll discover that it takes more than talent, strength, and the support of the fans to win the greatest prize in all of wrestling



Every time Billy Jack wrestles Ric Flair, he seems to get closer to winning his title. Billy tries to muscle his way out of Flair's headlock (opposite page). Billy grabs Flair in his excruciating full-nelson (above) and bounces the champion around the ring (right and below).



zine—and you, Billy Jack, if you're reading this—why you'll never win the World title from me.

First let me say that there's a lot of raw talent in Billy Jack. Much of this derives from the fact that Billy Jack has been a weight-lifter for many years, and with his strength and musculature, he's able to bull his opponents into submission using a pure strength hold like the full-nelson.

Another plus in Billy Jack's favor is his youth. He's at that stage in his career where he's impres-



sionable, where he's still learning a great deal from every match he wrestles in, and where—if he pays attention, and I mean *close* attention to what he's doing—he'll be able to improve enormously over the next few years. And that should be something to watch, because he's a truly formidable athlete right now.

A third asset in this young man is that he's got the fans behind him. Now personally, I look after Ric Flair first, and if the fans like



Flair is able to take advantage of certain weaknesses he sees in Billy Jack. The champion gets his challenger to the canvas and pounds away with his right fist (above). Flair flings Billy through the ropes and down to the arena floor (below).



my style, like my success, then that's fine. I'm not going to bend over backward to please the fans. But when you've got the fans on your side, like I had in Greensboro, North Carolina, last year in my World title cage match with Harley Race, it sometimes makes you able to dig that much deeper for that much more

strength when you really need it. And where Billy Jack is concerned—well, he's already said on several occasions that the fans are a prime motivating force in his career.

So what do we have here? A young man by the name of Billy Jack, with a lot of raw talent, a physique that is virtually second

to none, and with youth and the fans on his side.

Not bad. You might say that he's got what it takes to become NWA World heavyweight champion.

Like I said earlier, he does . . . almost.

Because in addition to those particular assets, Billy Jack has several liabilities working against him.

Very obviously, he lacks experience. For most of his career, he wrestled in the Pacific Northwest. His move to Florida was probably the best thing he could do for himself, because it exposed him to a wider variety of opponents, in turn forcing him to adapt to a wider variety of wrestling styles. And now that he's going to be wrestling in the World Class area, he should improve even more. But it will take years before he gains the experience necessary to capture the World title.

The kid also doesn't have the aggressiveness needed to become champion. You know the old saying: "Nice guys finish last." These sayings don't get to be old unless there's some truth to them, daddy. And Billy Jack, right now, is simply too nice a guy to become champion. He'll learn; that'll come with experience.

And Billy lacks something else that's needed to succeed in a challenge for the World title: finesse. He's more like an overgrown child than a seasoned athlete. You know when you get a 14-year-old kid who stands six feet tall and weighs 220 pounds? He's clumsy, he's awkward, and he just doesn't know what to do with his body. That's Billy Jack. He's too clumsy and awkward right now. He doesn't yet have the fluidity or the finesse to be able to execute the more elegant maneuvers in wrestling—maneuvers that, by the way, often make the difference between challenger

(Continued on page 51)

BUTCH REED

WILL HE BETRAY HIS FANS AGAIN?

*Butch Reed is the most popular wrestler in the Mid-South right now, but all that could change overnight. Reed may turn on the fans at the slightest provocation; it's happened before. And in this special examination, *The Wrestler* looks at why it may well happen again—and soon!*

Photos by Alice Marie Nelson and Buddy Myers



FROM NEW YORK to Louisiana, from California to Maine, fans of Mid-South wrestling look to Butch Reed these days as one of the most honorable and respected men in the entire professional wrestling world.

Indeed, Reed has done much to earn his popularity. In recent months, he has battled such rival Mid-South wrestlers as Ted DiBiase, Steve Williams, and Jake Roberts. He has also spent much of his free time visiting children's hospitals in and around New Orleans.

But as the cheers of the fans grow louder, and the number of fans supporting Reed grows greater, there is also a growing danger that Reed will betray these loyal fans.

"I can't imagine Reed doing anything to hurt the fans in Mid-South," said current North American heavyweight champion Terry Taylor. "There's a new attitude here in the Mid-South, a new excitement that's gripping not only the fans, but the wrestlers. Mid-South is getting more attention on television than ever before, and more and more fans are getting turned on to the excitement of Mid-South wrestling.

"Butch embodies a lot of that excitement," Taylor continued, "and I know he takes the fans very seriously. Deep down, he cares so much about the fans, and about making sure that they're happy. That's why he spends so much of his free time at the kids' hospitals. It's really, really important to him. It's genuine, and that's rare in any man."

Perhaps Taylor himself would feel as betrayed as the fans if Reed were to act as he did nearly two years ago.

At that time, a fan poll was sponsored by Mid-South wrestling to determine the most popular wrestler in that area. The top two contenders for that vote were Butch Reed and Junkyard Dog.

In a close finish, JYD edged out Reed. But rather than taking the defeat like a man, Reed threw a temper tantrum that turned his love for the fans and his close friend JYD into the most bitter hatred imaginable.

What resulted was a violent feud between Reed and JYD that lasted several months.

"That was a rough time for Mid-South wrestling," said matchmaker Grizzly Smith. "We were all very concerned about Butch, and about the attitude he had that for some reason told him to abuse the fans and destroy JYD. That sounds harsh, I know, but that's what it was, and it was painful to watch it happen to a man like Butch.

"But recent events in the Mid-South, most notably Reed's differences with Gen. Skandor Akbar, have straightened him out, I believe," Smith continued. "I am totally and thoroughly convinced that Reed is sincere in his actions these days."

But let's suppose a minute that the emotions that caused Reed to turn against the fans and JYD nearly two years ago were rekindled. It's not difficult to imagine. Terry Taylor recently captured the North American title from Ted DiBiase, and is the recipient of a

great deal of fan adoration; The Rock 'n' Roll Express, who hold the Mid-South tag team championship, are one of the most popular teams in the entire sport.

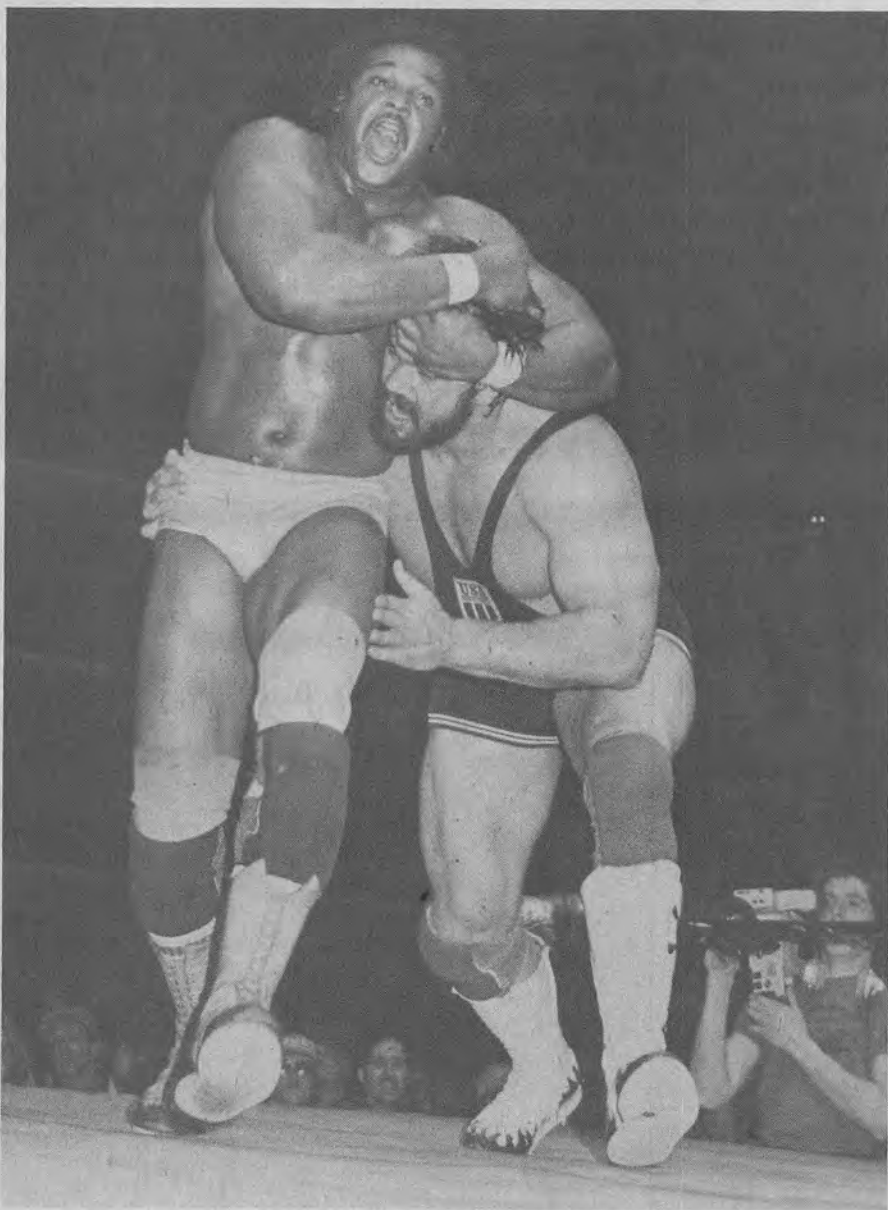
What if the jealousy that turned Reed into an uncontrollable madman two years ago resurfaced in the face of the fans' enormous love for Taylor and the Rock 'n' Rolls?

"Boy, that's a good question," said former North American



Not long ago, Butch Reed was one of the most hated Mid-South wrestlers. Reed accidentally (?) kicks the referee as he comes over the ropes (above). Butch bends the leg of the popular Jim Duggan (below).





The fans have been extremely supportive of Reed in his campaign against Steve "Dr. Death" Williams. Based on his past, though, is Reed destined to disappoint the fans again?



heavyweight champion Brad Armstrong. "I'll tell you something: I've known Butch Reed for a lot of years, and I've seen him go through those changes that you're talking about. Could it happen again?"

Armstrong scratched his head and sighed.

"Well, I hate to say this, but yeah, I guess it could happen again. I'd hate to see it, though."

If Reed is going to change his attitude as he did several years ago, it will happen soon. Why?

First of all, Mid-South wrestling is now on Atlanta SuperStation WTBS, a national cable television outlet. That means that there are more fans of Mid-South wrestling now than ever before. If Reed were jealous of the Mid-South area fans' adulation of JYD, how will that jealousy hold up against a nation's adulation of Terry Taylor, The Rock 'n' Roll Express, Brad Armstrong, and Hacksaw Duggan?

Second, the Mid-South is in a state of change right now. The North American title has changed hands four times in the last six months, and tag teams are lining up for the belts held by the Rock 'n' Rolls. The fans are following these developments very closely, and that takes away from attention that might otherwise be lavished on Reed.

But in addition to the rising popularity of Mid-South and the fast-changing events there, Reed is also facing pressures from men like Ted DiBiase, Gen. Skandor Akbar, and Giant Kamala. All three of these men would like nothing better than to cripple Reed, placing him out of wrestling permanently.

Lesser men have crumbled under these kinds of pressures in the past. But there's one point that Mid-South fans *must* consider: If Reed does turn bad again, they should be very careful about trusting him the next time. □

ONE OF THE most interesting and ferocious battles in recent memory was recently held in St. Louis between NWA champ Harley Race and the WWA belt-holder, Bruiser. The match went on to the one hour time limit and was filled with devastating moves.

Bodies went flying across the ring. It was a combination of brutality and grace which displayed championship wrestling at its finest.

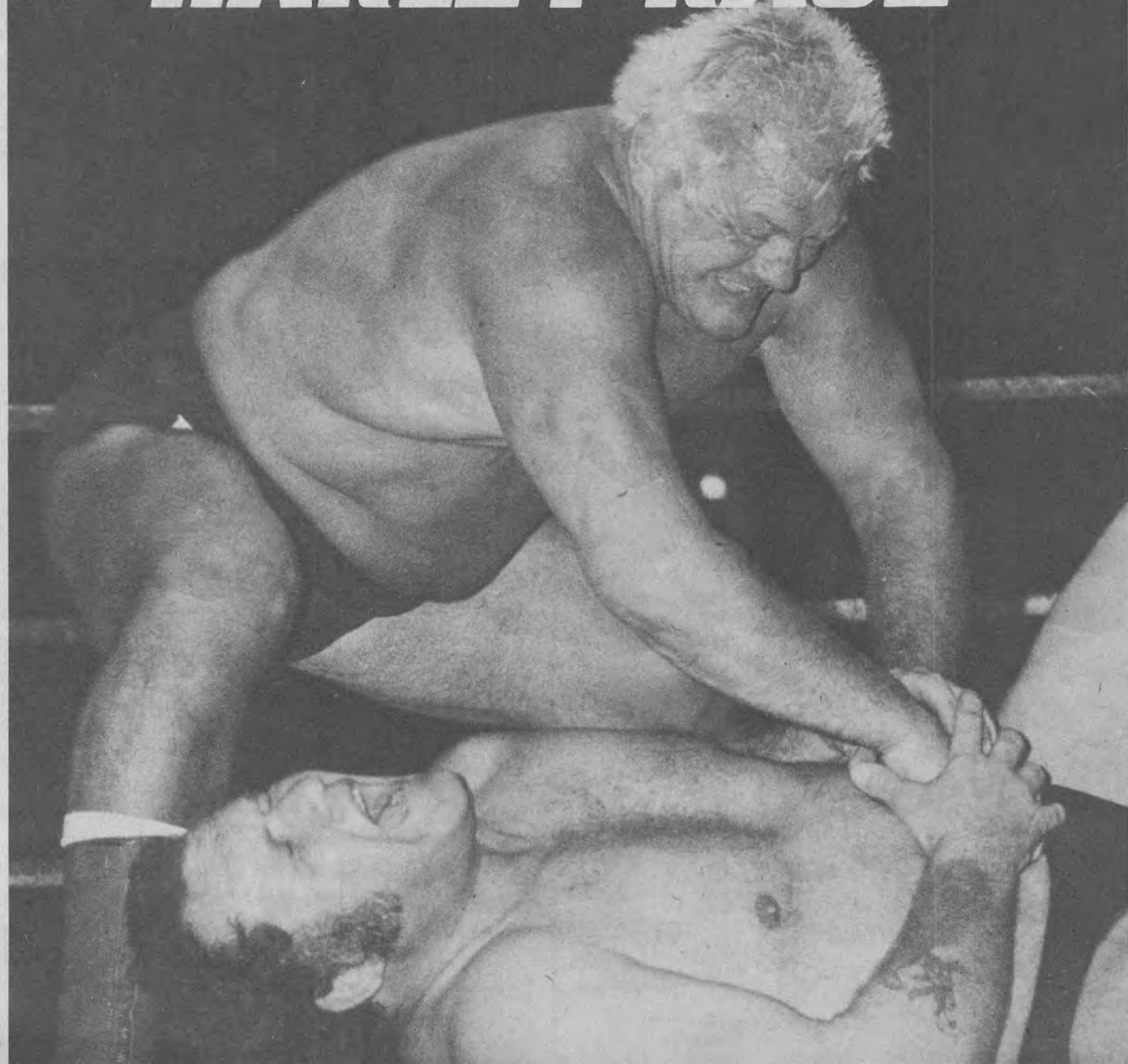
Yet this match, like so many others involving WWA battlers, received little attention, despite a crowd believed to be one of

the largest ever to attend a match in St. Louis history.

Why? Where was the media attention, the recognition that WWA stars like Bruiser should be receiving? What prevents the WWA's acceptance as one of the major associations in professional wrestling?

THE WAR BETWEEN

BRUISER AND HARLEY RACE



"I don't like to think ill of people, but I sometimes have the feeling that major federations are afraid to give us equal status. They're afraid we might try to attract fans away from their wrestling cards," said one WWA official. "That's something we'd never do."

An NWA official attending the Race-Bruiser match responded frankly to the WWA accusation: "The WWA falls short of having the required arenas by five. That may seem like a trivial point, but there must be a set number of arenas for the federation to schedule matches

in. We're not afraid of losing fans. There are just certain rules which must be followed.

The tumultuous match between Race and Bruiser should dispel forever any doubts about the quality of inter-federation brawls. With the crowd standing and roaring from the start, the two champions, Race from the NWA and Bruiser from the WWA, tangled in a magnificent match, no reluctance, no fears, just a masterful display of wrestling ferocity.

Bruiser, who has modified his old malicious ways, fell into a Race trap and found himself in a crushing neckhold. Race growled, lowered him to the ground, quickly released his hold, and flung Bruiser around the ring by his arms. A brilliant move.

Bruiser rose to his feet and flung himself forward, his arms extended. His thick hands

(Continued on page 58)

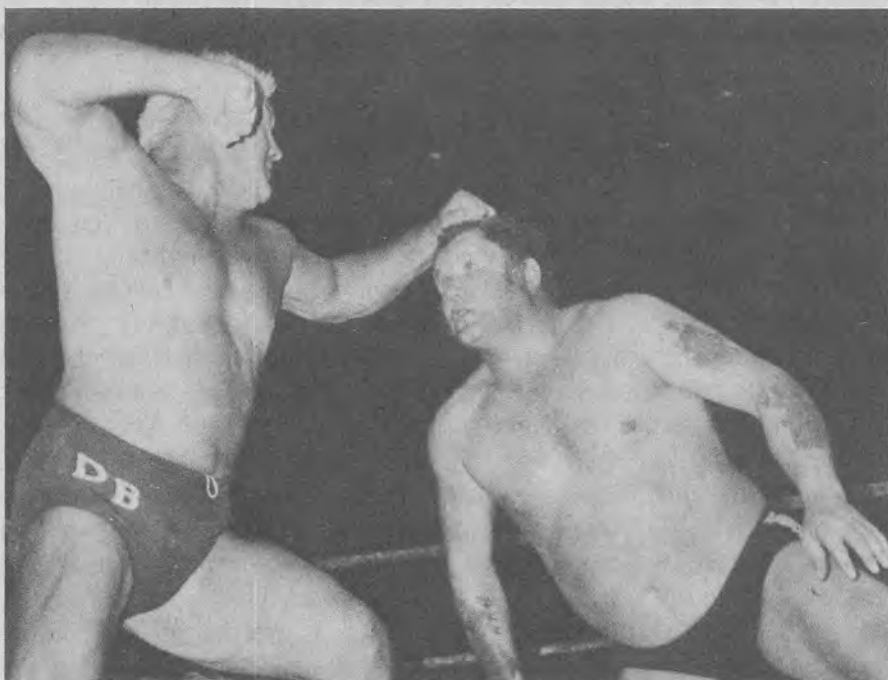


The referee explains some basic ground rules as NWA champion Harley Race and WWA champion Bruiser prepare to square off. This was a match fans in both associations eagerly anticipated for quite some time.

When two veterans like Bruiser and Harley Race have a confrontation, you know a war has to result. But in this particular battle, there was more at stake than just a result for the record books

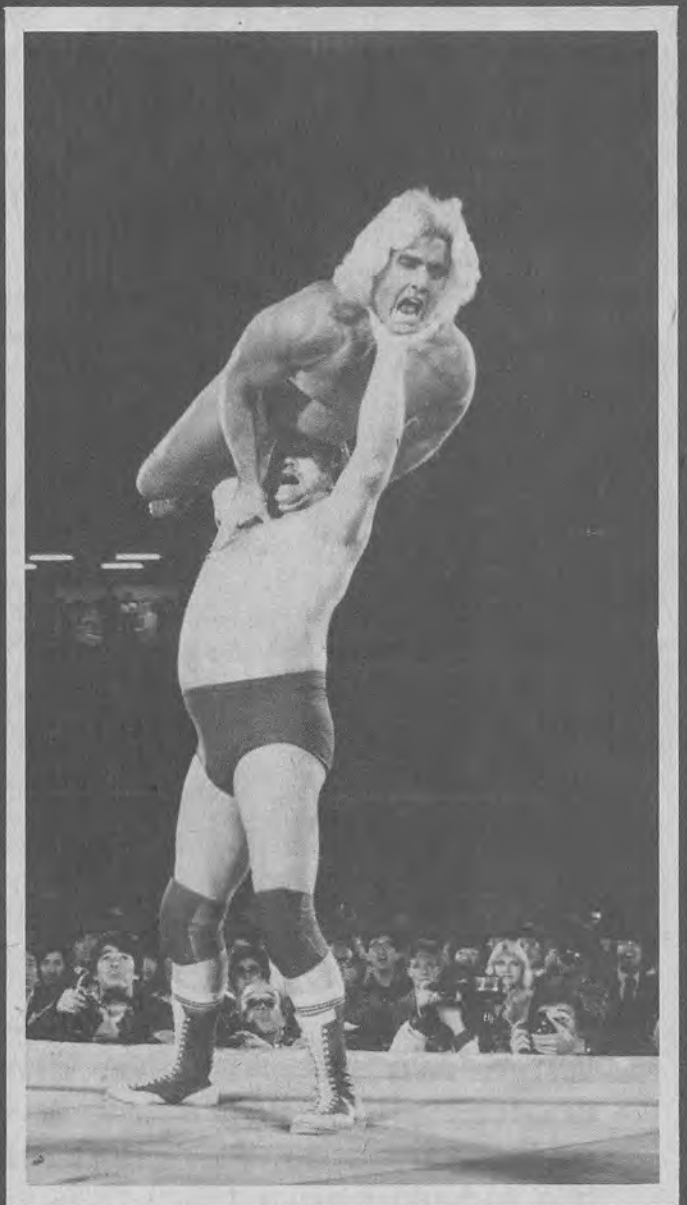


A beautiful suplex slam by Bruiser sends Race flying (above). The match becomes a brawl as Bruiser is about to punch the NWA champion (right).



RIC FLAIR'S THIRD TITLE REIGN WILL BE HIS SHORTEST!

Why does Harley Race believe Ric Flair's third NWA title reign will be his shortest? Race's reasons may shock you, but they can't be ignored. In this revealing article, Race not only tells about Flair, but about himself, the NWA title, and the dangers of being a professional wrestler



By Harley Race

BEFORE WE BEGIN in earnest, let me comment up front on what Ric Flair fans must have screamed as soon as they read the headline of this story: I'm not a neutral observer when it comes to the NWA World title. I plan to win it again and I plan to take it from Flair. People have the right to think I'm writing this article as a means of psychological warfare.

At the same time, I contend that Ric Flair's third NWA title reign will be his shortest. I'm not going to ask you to take my word for it. All I ask is that you read my arguments with an open mind. If you don't

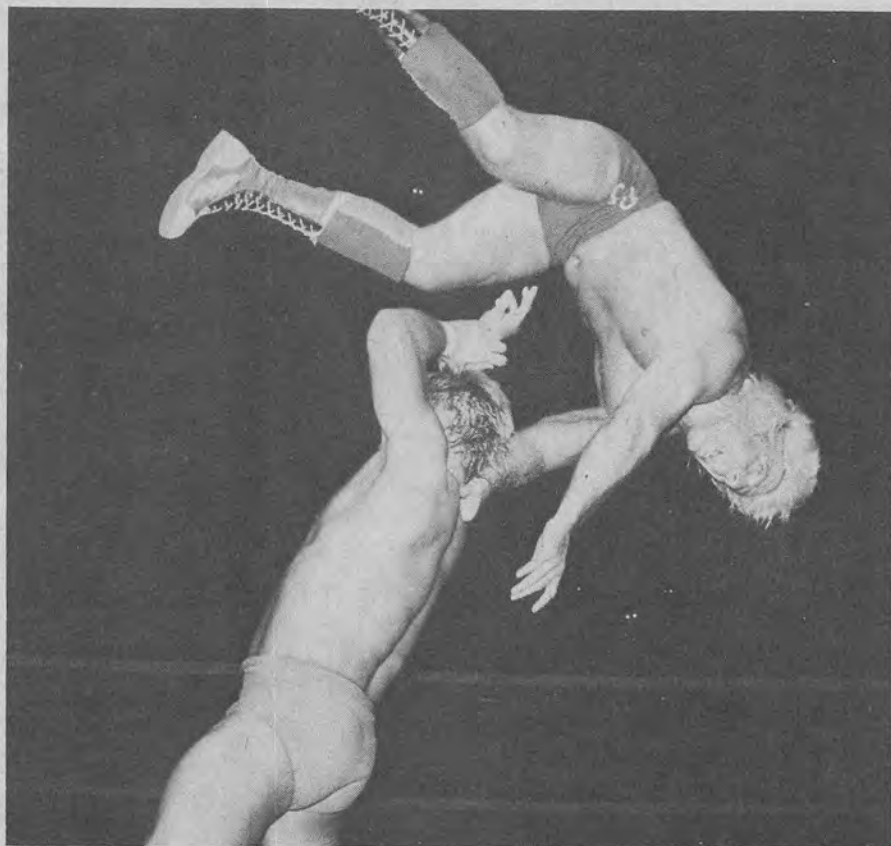
agree, that's your privilege. But when Flair falls, don't say I didn't tell you why before it happened.

When Flair beat Kerry Von Erich to win the title a third time, at first I figured he'd probably keep it for a good, long while. After all, he suffered the anguish of losing the belt twice (and no one knows better than I how horrible it feels to suffer that!). I assumed he'd do what he should be protect it. Like many people, I considered his loss to Von Erich a combination of a fluke and overwork on Flair's part.

Then I wrestled Flair. I would have beaten him easily except I

was in shock over how poorly he wrestled. I know that sounds like sour grapes but it's true. Flair was slow, clumsy, and dull-witted. In other words, the man is burnt out. In the beginning of the match, I figured he was trying to sucker me. That's why I wrestled too cautiously. Then when I realized he had little left, I couldn't take advantage of it. It was like being at the scene of an accident and stealing the victim's wallet. I pitied Flair.

Afterward, I wondered if the man wasn't sick or just had one of those off nights every wrestler dreads. I still couldn't believe Flair had lost



so much in so short a time. That's when I decided to see him wrestle someone else. The perfect match to judge Flair was his battle against Ronnie Garvin.

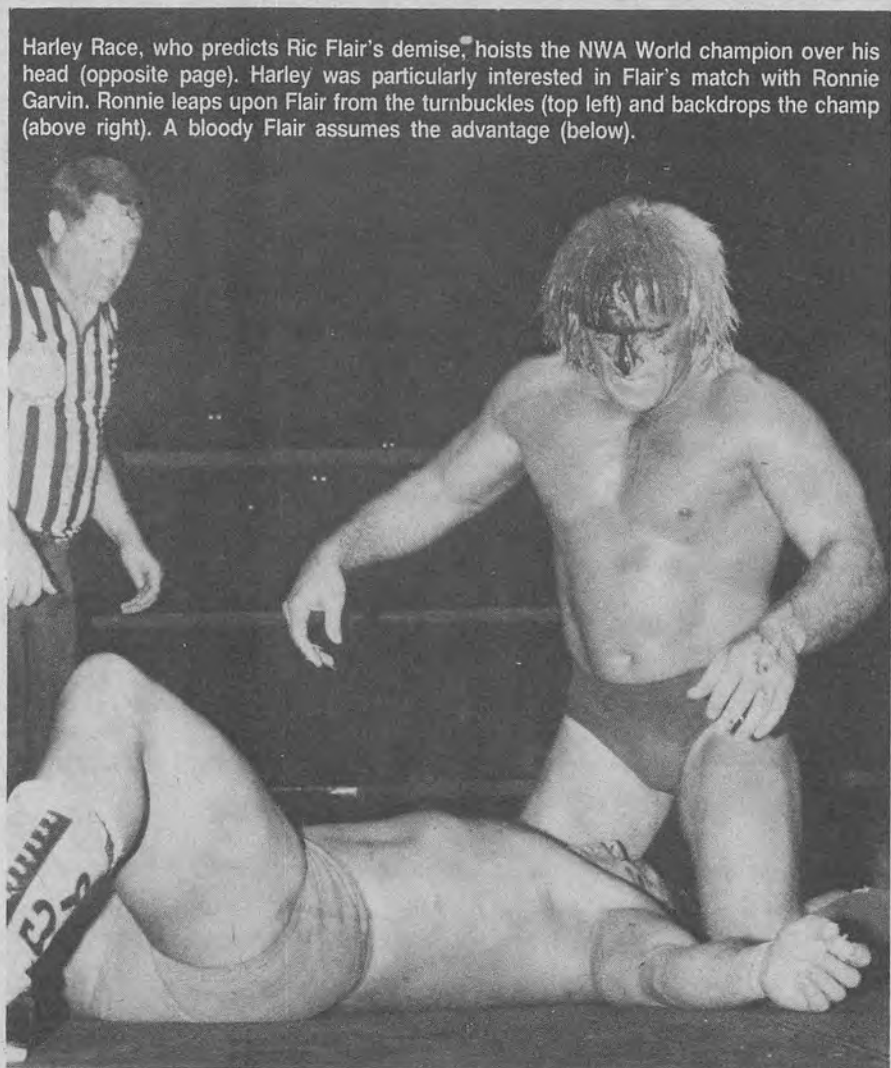
My choice of Garvin might seem strange to the casual wrestling fan. The uninformed think he's not top-flight, an impression Garvin doesn't try hard to correct. He prefers to let fans and opponents think he's a minor star. This allows him to surprise his opponents who might have thought they didn't need to train hard to wrestle him. Let me tell you from experience, no opponent ever takes Garvin lightly twice.

I knew Flair wouldn't take him lightly. Ric knew he had to be at his best to defeat Garvin. If there was anything left of the Flair ability, it would have to be shown in this match.

Before going any further, fairness forces me to admit that Flair was at one time something special. When he defeated me for the NWA belt the last time, he was an extraordinary athlete. In several of his matches after that title victory.

(Continued on page 62)

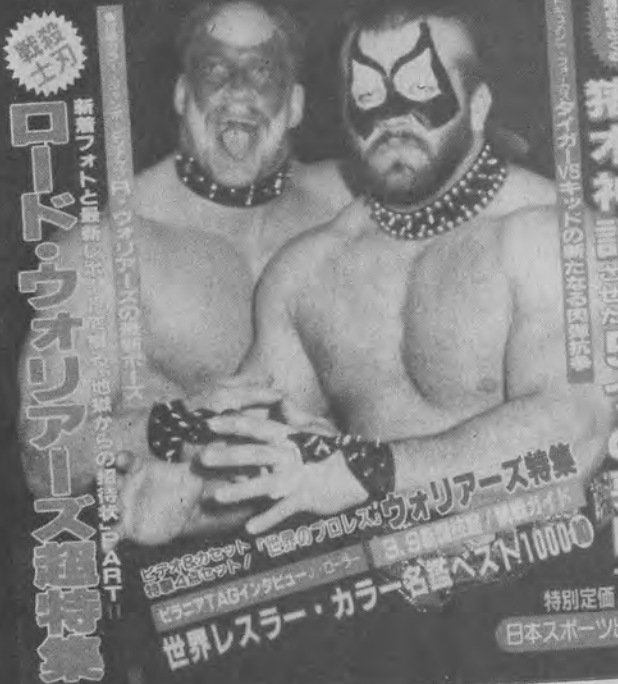
Harley Race, who predicts Ric Flair's demise, hoists the NWA World champion over his head (opposite page). Harley was particularly interested in Flair's match with Ronnie Garvin. Ronnie leaps upon Flair from the turnbuckles (top left) and backdrops the champ (above right). A bloody Flair assumes the advantage (below).



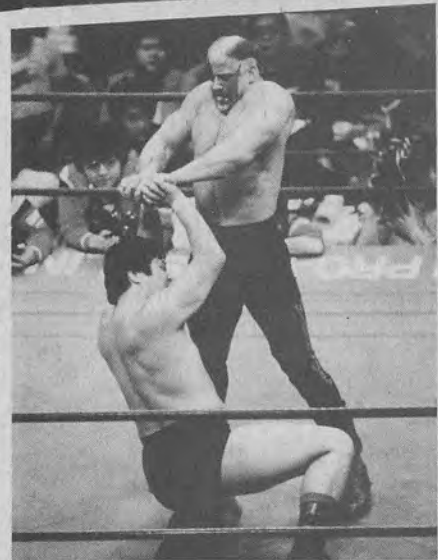
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Invitation to Ring



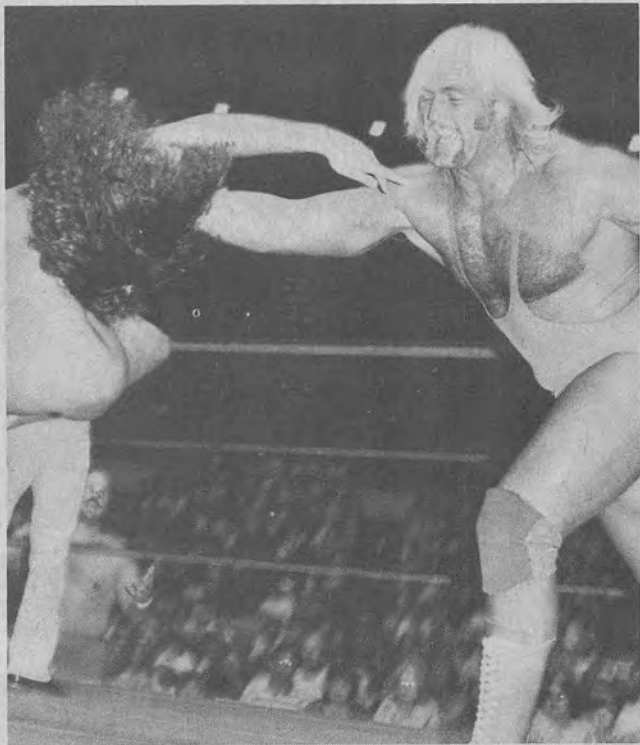
Weekly ユニーク



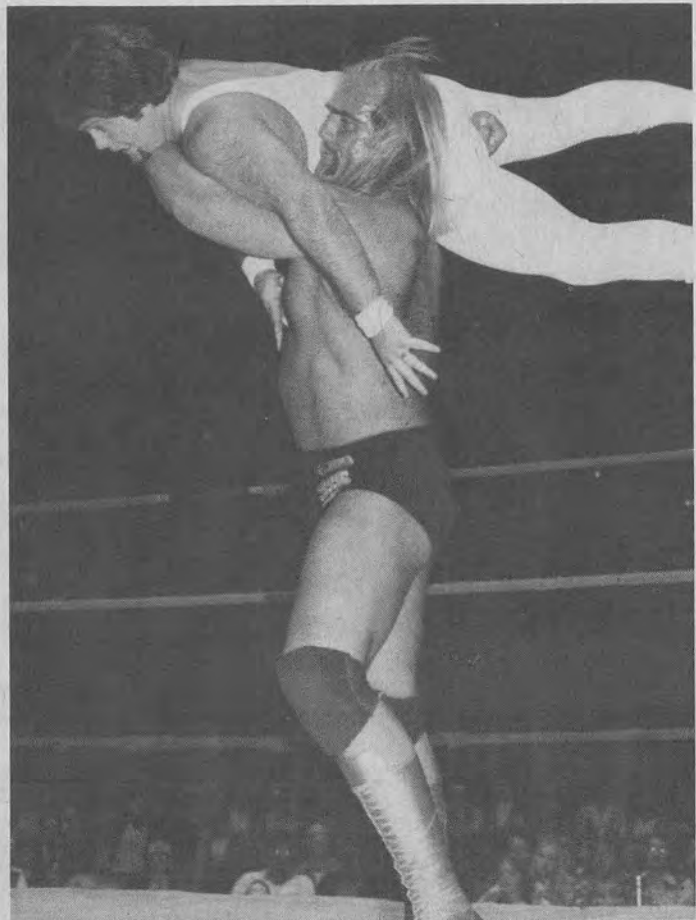
Ten Days Of Blood And Glory THE ROAD WARRIORS INVADE JAPAN!

Not content with the level of competition they've been facing in the United States, The Road Warriors and Paul Ellering set out to conquer new horizons. Their first target for destruction: Japan!

THE EARLY YEARS



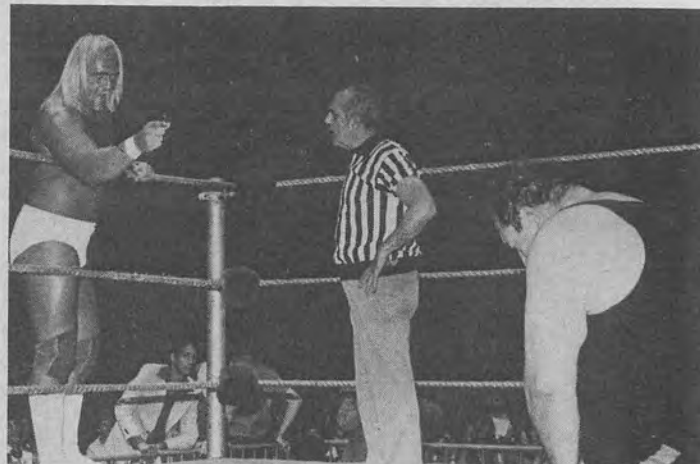
Wrestling as Terry Boulder in the Mid-Southern area in early 1981, Hulk Hogan battles Pete Austin (above left), Jerry Lawler (right), Larry Latham (below left), and Ron Bass (bottom right). Roddy Piper, take note: Hulk Hogan can grow hair on his chest!



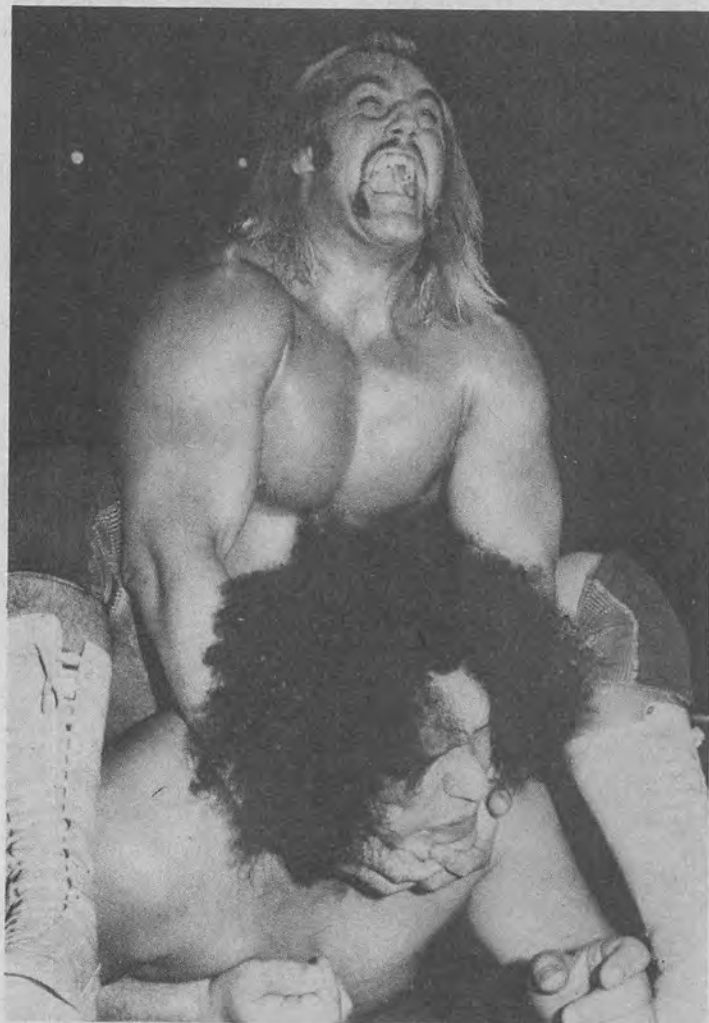
WWF RULEBREAKER



Freddie Blassie boasts his wrestler's "24-inch pythons" (above). Having been pinned by Tony Atlas while his foot was on the ropes, the Hulk shows referee Dick Kroll that he does not take defeat well (top right).



Hogan was anything but the fans' favorite in matches against Andre the Giant (left), Gorilla Monsoon (above), and Bob Backlund (below).



IN THE AWA



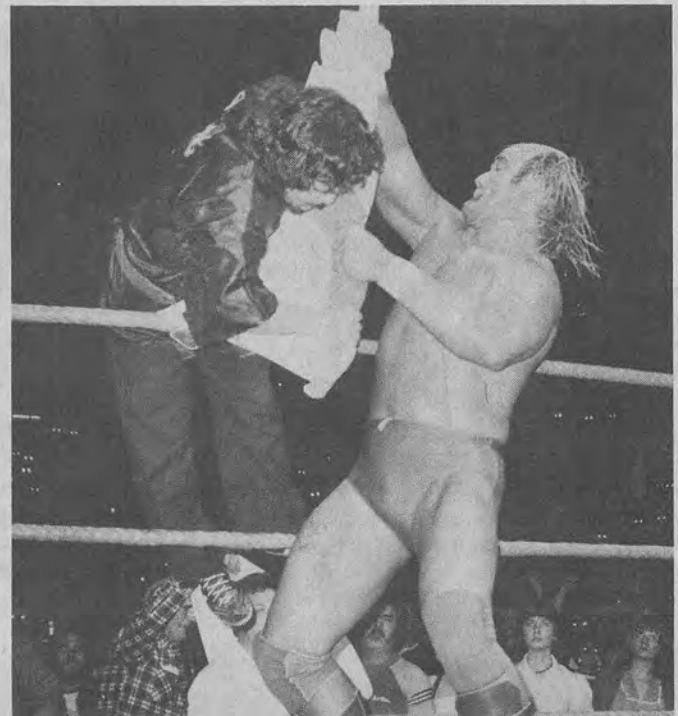
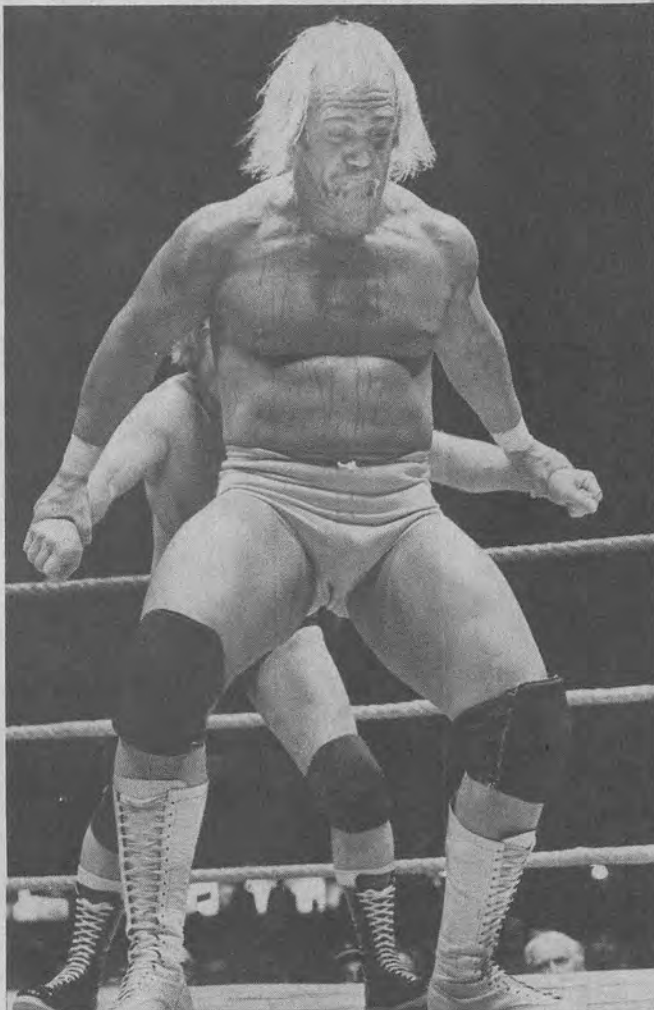
Hogan first began wrestling against rulebreakers when he moved into the AWA. The Hulkster slams a chair against Jerry Blackwell's head (above). One of Hogan's frustrating title matches with AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel (below).



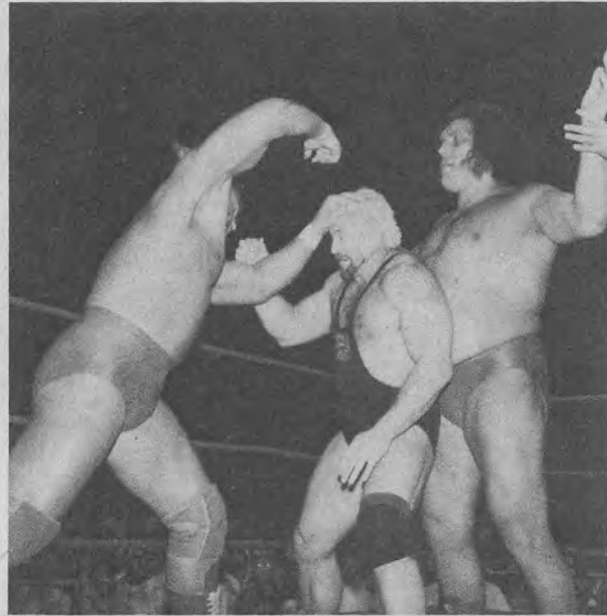
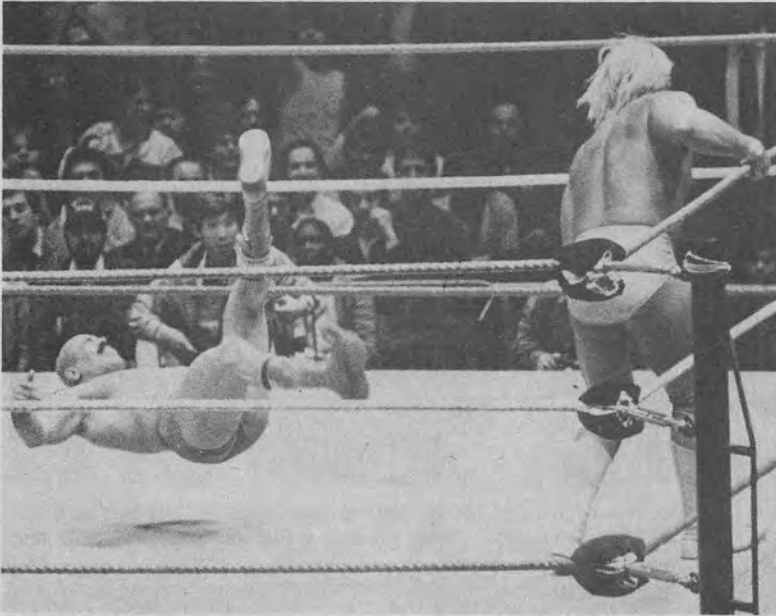
Knowing he would not be able to beat Hogan in this special wrist-wrestling challenge, Jesse Ventura would flip over the table and attack the Hulk.



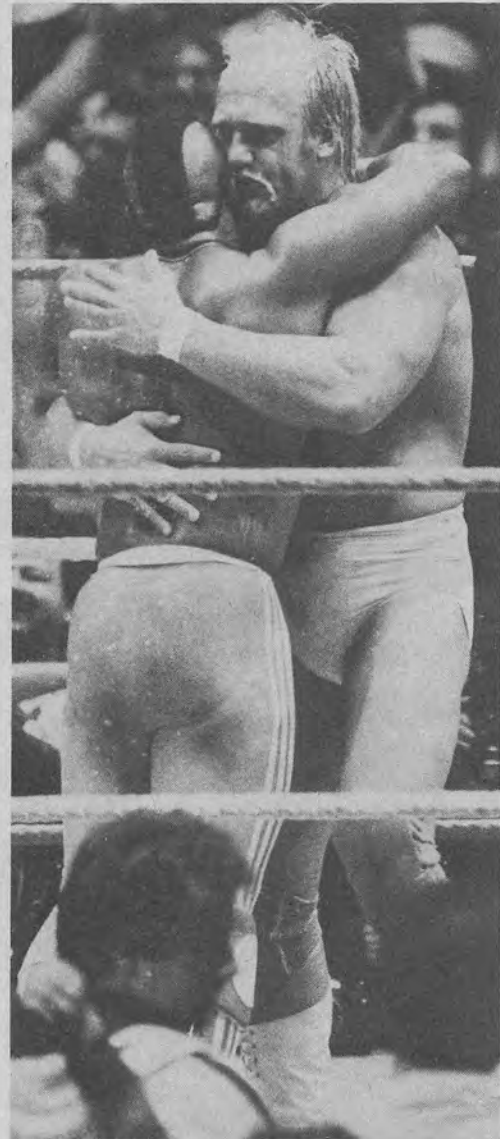
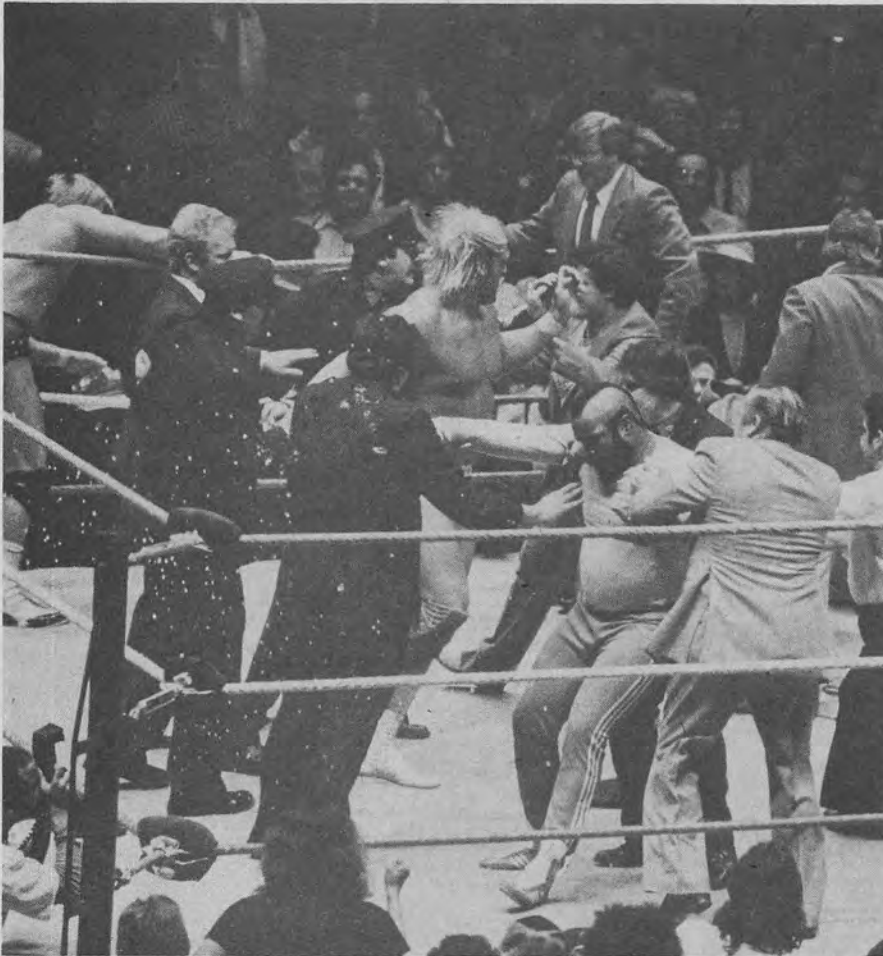
Hogan applies a rib-crushing bearhug on Ken Patera (above). In defense of America, The Hulk attacks Mr. Saito's manager, Mr. Hatori, with the Japanese flag (below).



WWF CHAMPION

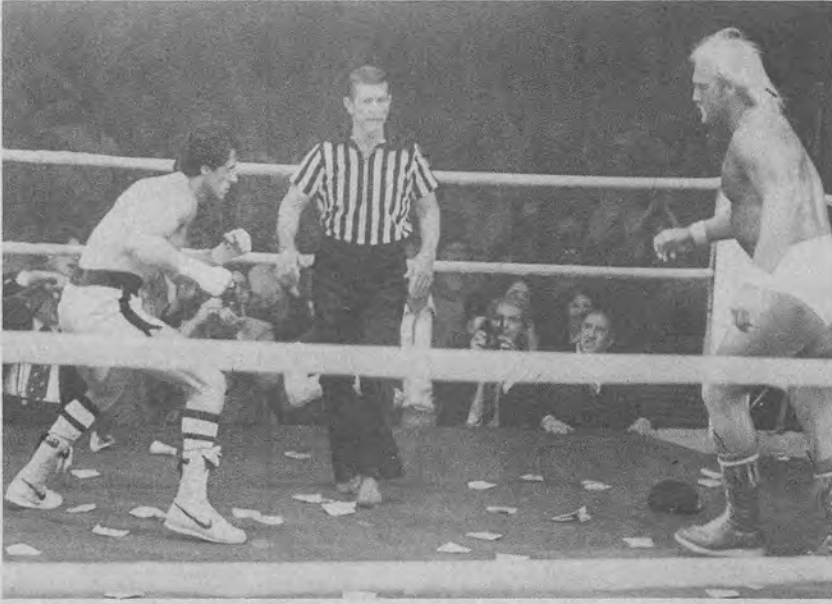


Hogan sends The Iron Sheik sprawling during his WWF title-winning effort on January 23, 1984 (above left). Teaming with Andre the Giant was one of the biggest thrills of his career. The two make a sandwich of Ken Patera (above right).

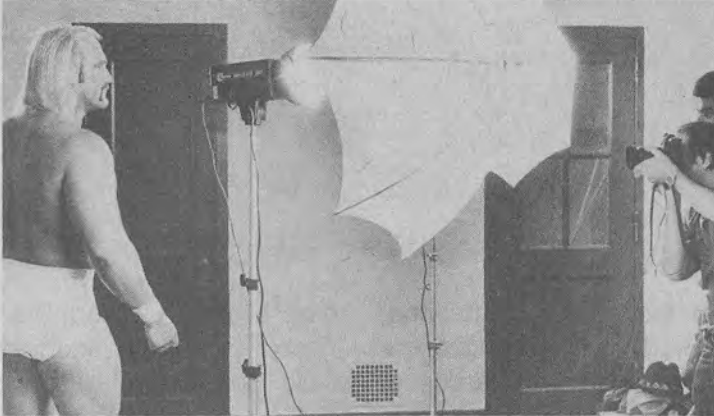


A partnership was instantly formed when Mr. T rushed into the Madison Square Garden ring to rescue Hulk Hogan from Roddy Piper, Cowboy Bob Orton, and Paul Orndorff in February (above). A month later, Hogan and Mr. T exhaustedly fall into each other's arms after their WrestleMania victory over Piper and Orndorff (right).

BEYOND THE SQUARED CIRCLE



After playing "Thunderlips" opposite Sylvester Stallone in *Rocky III* (above), Hogan made an appearance on *The Tonight Show With Johnny Carson* (above right). Hogan poses for *The Wrestler's* Bill Apter (below).



Cyndi Lauper wins a Grammy Award, and Hogan is there to help her celebrate (above). Lauper, Hogan, and Mr. T discuss NBC's *Saturday Night's Main Event* at a press gathering in New York (below).



BRUISER BRODY & STAN HANSEN: Today Puerto Rico, Tomorrow The AWA?



STAN HANSEN TOOK the tag from his partner, Bruiser Brody. As his 283-pound body charged into the ring, Hansen thrust his right arm into the air, extended his index and pinky fingers in his characteristic salute, and let out a Texas war cry that seemed to begin at his feet and grow louder with each inch as it approached his mouth.

"Hoooo!" Hansen howled. Seconds later he was choking King Tonga on the ropes, yelling at no one in particular as he did so:

"Look at this punk! Take this! Hahaha! Texas justice! Hooooo!"

And in the corner of the ring, Bruiser Brody smiled in admiration of the destructive tactics of his tag team partner.

Brody and Hansen, who defeated fan favorites Tonga and Carlos Colon on this night, are the most feared combination in Puerto Rico. Several prominent Puerto Rican promoters will not have them compete in their arenas due to the heavy damage they tend to inflict to the dressing room areas, the ring, and, most of all, to their opponents.

One Puerto Rican promoter spoke to *The Wrestler* about the

team of Hansen and Brody, but wished to remain anonymous to avoid possible retaliation by the team.

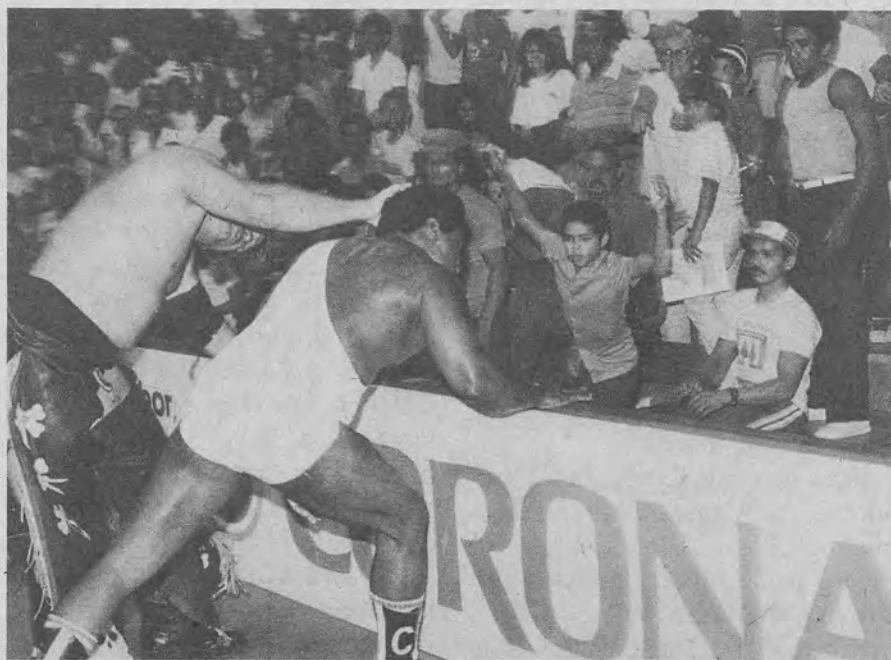
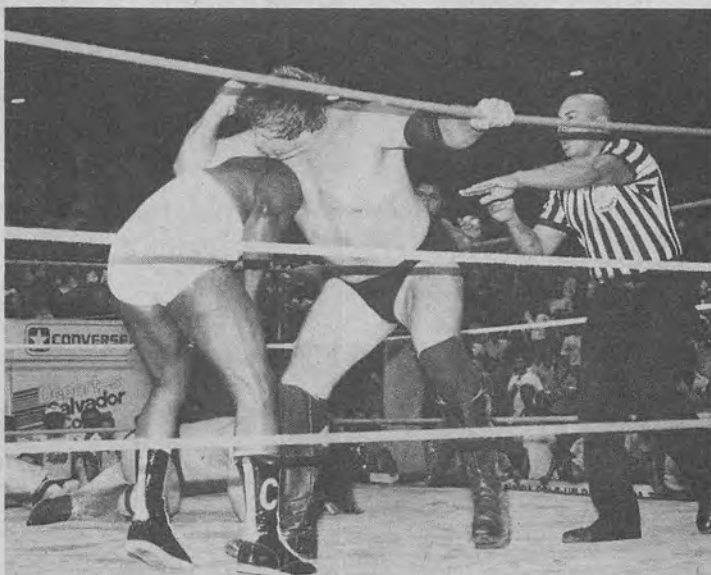
"The last time I booked them into one of my arenas," the promoter said, "they caused total havoc. I don't know what they did to psych themselves up before their match, but they totally destroyed my dressing rooms: three broken tables, four broken mirrors, two lockers rendered completely useless . . . and I can't count the number of broken chairs.

"Then, during the match, they

A brutal tag team match in Puerto Rico saw two formidable powerhouses—Bruiser Brody and Stan Hansen—joining forces against the team of Carlos Colon and King Tonga. Was the Brody-Hansen team simply a one-shot affair, or is Brody scouting a permanent new tag team partner to aid him in his conquest of the AWA?



King Tonga is strangled with the ring rope by Hansen (left) and chopped in the throat by Brody (above). The Puerto Rican fans are dismayed by Hansen's treatment of Carlos Colon (below and bottom).



started slamming chairs all over the place, in the ring, at ringside, over their opponents' heads. There were wooden chairs and metal chairs spread around the arena. I forget whether it was Hansen or Brody, but one of them slammed one of the wooden chairs to bits on the ring apron, and the splinters went flying. They picked up the splintered wood and were just about to use them on their opponents when about 12 other wrestlers came in to stop them.

"I confronted Brody and Hansen about what they did at the end of the night, after they had showered and were ready to



Hansen, in control, has Tonga down on his hands and knees, vulnerable to absorb more punishment (above). Brody lifts Tonga by the shoulder and pants, and slams him to the mat (below).



leave," the promoter said. "They just laughed in my face and left the arena slapping each other on their backs like they had just completed a job well done. After that,

I vowed never to have Hansen or Brody in any of my arenas ever again."

But it's that very penchant for reckless destruction that has provided Brody and Hansen with their unique reputations.

"Hansen is a wildman," said Colon in his dressing room after the match. "Pound for pound, he's one of the strongest men in the sport, and he uses any and all means at his disposal for unleashing that strength on his opponent.

"Brody is simply a maniac," Colon said, "but he's a maniac under control. He has an extensive knowledge of scientific moves and maneuvers, and he couples that with an uncanny attitude of total recklessness. I wouldn't want to step into the ring against him, no matter how big I was or how much experience I had. He's too dangerous a man."

Most recently, Brody has invaded the AWA under the management of Sheik Adnan Al-Kaissie. Brody has cut a bloody swath through the area in his singles matches, and speculation has

arisen that Al-Kaissie is looking for the proper tag team partner with whom Brody can take the AWA World belts from Baron Von Raschke and The Crusher.

Perhaps he need look no further than Puerto Rico.

"The team of Stan Hansen and Bruiser Brody has already established supremacy in Puerto Rico," admitted Colon, "and I think that they would be one of the most formidable teams ever to hit the AWA. I think that if it happened, there would wind up being a major feud between Hansen and Brody and The Road Warriors, who are now making quite a reputation for themselves throughout the AWA.

"But the problem right now is that Hansen has made some commitments in the Mid-Atlantic area, while Brody is contracted to Al-Kaissie in the AWA," Colon said. "For Al-Kaissie to get Hansen to the AWA to team with Brody would take a great amount of money. He would have to buy out all of Hansen's Mid-Atlantic contracts.

"Of course," Colon continued, "Al-Kaissie's been known to spread a lot of money around in the past, so there's no reason to think he wouldn't do the same thing now."

Indeed, Hansen fits the mold of the kind of wrestler that Al-Kaissie favors.

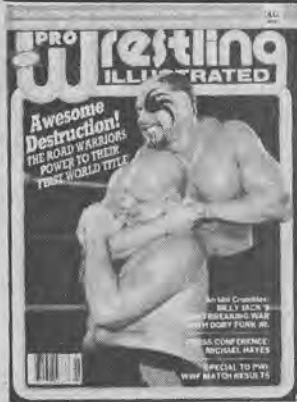
Along with Brody, Al-Kaissie now has Abdullah the Butcher in his stable, a man whose wrestling style is that of a destructive juggernaut. Should Al-Kaissie bring Hansen to the AWA and team him with Brody, he would be unleashing a destructive force upon the area the likes of which AWA fans have only heard rumors about. The team of Brody and Hansen is experienced, powerful, deadly . . .

. . . And a dangerous threat to the AWA just waiting to occur. The next move is Al-Kaissie's. □

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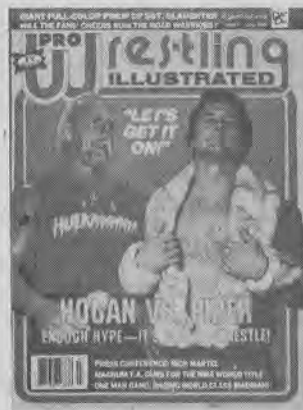
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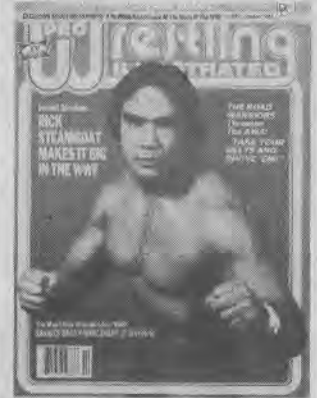
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BOCKWINKEL-BRAVO

(Continued from page 23)



Bockwinkel enjoys a rare instance in the match in which he holds the upper hand (above left). But Dino soon regains the advantage, applying a wraparound leglock on the champion (above right).



to Heenan, who watched the match as if he was staring at a ghost that hated his guts.

The final minute showed Bockwinkel at his worst. He gave up trying to win. Instead, he decided to escape with his title. Grabbing Bravo by the arm, he swung his foe so that the two wrestlers were surrounding the referee. An instant later, the referee lay on the mat unconscious. One didn't need a diagram to understand what happened. Bockwinkel had knocked the referee unconscious.

Several seconds later, the referee regained his senses enough to announce Bockwinkel was disqualified. Nick pretended to be enraged and contended loudly that Bravo had done the damage. Nobody believed Nick's anger. They knew he'd done the deed and why. Nick's look of genuine relief when he left the ring and made for the dressing room told the story.

The next day, Bockwinkel and Heenan left Montreal for a series of scheduled defenses in Japan with huge smiles on their faces. Mission accomplished. Found, one AWA champion's wrestling edge. They were ready to take on the world again.

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Bravo was strangely calm in his dressing room, as if marshaling all his concentration on the coming bout. All the preparation was complete. Now he could only wait for the moment of battle.

The two men entered the arena to loud but sharply different ovations. Bravo was greeted by cheers and Bockwinkel strutted down the aisle to boos and catcalls. Once the two men were inside the ring, they stood and faced each other with a professional athlete's sense of duty.

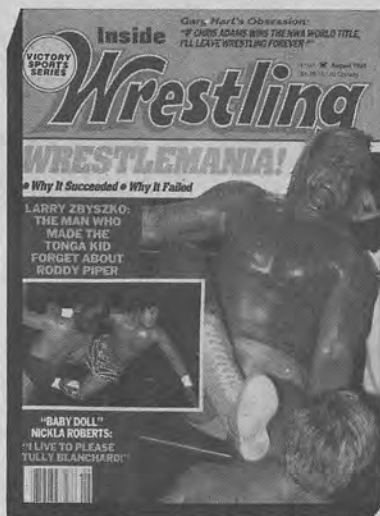
At the bell, the two men warily came together. What happened then could better be described by epic poets than journalists. Like two thundering gods of war, they battled furiously for what seemed strangely like both an instant and an eternity. At first, neither man could gain an advantage. Then Bockwinkel seemed to be in control, only for Bravo to confound him. Then Bravo seemed to be unstoppable, but Bockwinkel used his sly, illegal tactics to thwart Dino's victory. Every so often, one looked

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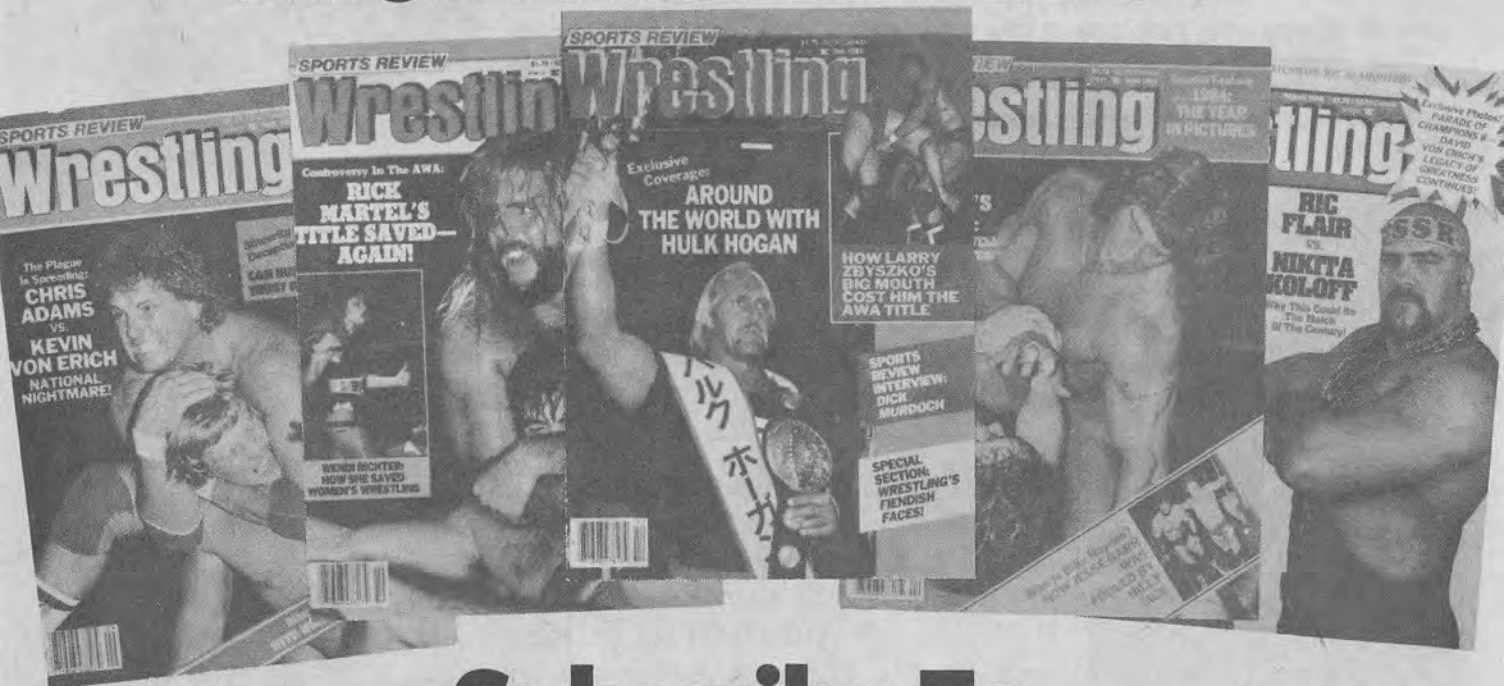
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BILLY JACK

(Continued from page 26)

and champion.

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BUZZ SAWYER

(Continued from page 15)



Garvin manages a brief offensive, but for the most part, Sawyer controlled the flow of the action. Not long before, when the same two men wrestled on television, the momentum went in the opposite direction.

how to look normal. It was probably the closest thing to sheer hell that I had experienced up to that point.

batling for months. But to have the added media pressure can't help Sawyer one bit.

I think Buzz Sawyer is going through the very same thing that I went through. I can't even imagine what it must be like to have three or four television cameras staring me in the face. Wrestling is tough enough, particularly against an opponent that you've been

Then again, there are some wrestlers who work better under that kind of intense media pressure. They realize that there are millions of wrestling fans nationwide tuning in and their egos just drink it up like there's no tomorrow. They thrive on pressure and attention, and the



Garvin postpones his eventual defeat by kicking out of Sawyer's pinning attempt at the last second. The blood on Sawyer's torso and trunks was spilt by Garvin.

presence of the media increases their energy level.

I don't think Sawyer benefits from that attention. I've seen him on television from Florida and from the Midwest, and in all cases he's much less of an effective wrestler than he is live.

Then again, perhaps now that Sawyer knows what the problem is and realizes that it's only cameras and viewers on the other side of those cameras, just like there are fans viewing his matches on the other side of those ring ropes in the Omni, maybe he'll be able to turn himself around and become as effective a wrestler in a television setting as he is a wrestler in strictly an arena setting.

I hope so. I may not agree with his style, but Buzz Sawyer deserves to be seen for the skilled athlete that he is. □

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INTRODUCTION

(Continued from page 6)



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Billy Jack Haynes is one of the strongest men in wrestling. And over the past few years, he has learned how to integrate his strength with a repertoire of fine holds. Ric Flair is perhaps the smartest man in all of wrestling. And he can hold his own when it comes to power maneuvers as well. Flair has wrestled Haynes on numerous occasions, and the NWA champion has admitted he was impressed. Ric Flair: "Billy Jack Has What It Takes To Be Champion—Almost!" (April 1985) may not sound like a compliment to you, but coming from the cocky Flair, it is high praise indeed.

Few wrestlers have the natural gifts that Butch Reed has. But one "natural gift" this fine wrestler lacks is an even temperament. Too often, he has become frustrated and has turned on his friends and the fans. Currently, Butch is entrapped in a feud in the Mid-South against former friend Dick Murdoch. This time, the fans are on Reed's side. But a ques-

(Continued on page 56)

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INTRODUCTION

(Continued from page 54)

tion we asked about a year ago is just as intriguing today. **Butch Reed: Will He Betray The Fans Again?** (July 1985). Let's hope the answer remains a loud "No!"

A fan named Jerry Tompkins recently wrote a letter to us that complained, "Why is it that you people never do stories on the greatest legend in wrestling history anymore? I'm talking about Harley Race, of course. Ever since he lost his title to Ric Flair, you people have been ignoring him. Worse, there are many new wrestling fans who never heard of Race! At least reprint some old stuff on him so these young, uninformed wimps can read about him." Well, Mr. Tompkins, rest easy. We agree with your assessment of Race, and, to prove it, we are printing two articles on him back to back. In the first, **The War Between Bruiser And Harley Race**, (May 1978), we see a Race in his prime, as tough and as mean as the Midwest land that spawned him. And as for the second story, well when it comes to title reigns, no man has more experience than Harley Race, who has held the NWA title a record seven times. Soon after Ric Flair won the NWA title a third time, Race was asked to write a story for *The Wrestler*. As a sworn enemy of Flair's, Race wasn't



Ric Flair and Harley Race battle in a cage. Nobody knows more about wrestling—and title reigns—than the former seven-time NWA champion Race.

expected to be impartial—and he wasn't. Still, his observations were interesting. "Ric Flair's Third Title Reign Will Be His Shortest" by Harley Race (October 1984) raised eyebrows when it was printed, although it seems mild today. Ironically, we now know that Ric Flair's third title reign is actually his longest! Still, Ric has a long way to go to equal Harley Race's historic achievements.

They are, simply, awesome. And as big as they look to Americans, The Road Warriors look twice as huge to the diminutive Japanese. **Ten Days Of Blood And Glory: The Road Warriors Invade Japan** (August 1985) takes you on tour with the world's most ferocious tag team.

His career has been truly remarkable. Hulk Hogan has risen from musclebound volleyball player on the beach at Venice, California, to become the number one sports star in the world. **The Amazing Career Of Hulk Hogan—From Rookie To Champion** (September 1985) starts at the very beginning of his career. With some never-before-seen photographs that only *The Wrestler* can provide, this is indeed a collector's item to treasure for years to come.

They are big, they are mean, they are untamable, and, yes, for a while they were a tag team. **Bruiser Brody And Stan Hansen: Today Puerto Rico, Tomorrow The AWA?** (November 1984) profiles a duo with destruction on its mind. Hansen and Brody never brought their team to the AWA, although Hansen is currently there as the number one contender for Rick Martel's AWA belt. Will Brody join Hansen in '86? If so, will they be a match for The Road Warriors? Whatever happens, after you read this story, consider yourself warned to the possibilities.

That's the lineup this month. If you have any comments or criticisms, we'd love to hear them. Send them to:

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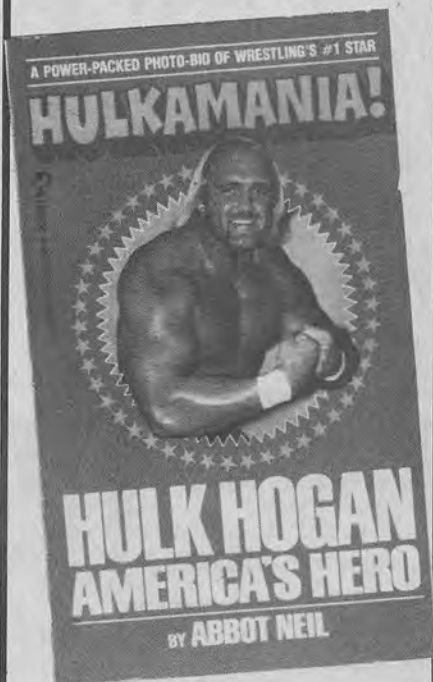
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BRUISER AND HARLEY RACE

(Continued from page 31)



Bruiser kicks Harley in the face as the NWA king tries to reenter the ring. Although much of the match was scientific, violent brawling did erupt and the fans witnessed one of the best matches in years.

wrapped around Race's neck, Bruiser barreled his meaty skull into the NWA champ's stomach and tossed him backward. Race landed on his knees after doing an awkward somersault.

The second fall began with both men grappling furiously in the center of the ring, struggling to find an opening. Suddenly, Bruiser's right leg darted out and tripped Race onto the canvas. Surprised, though not stunned, Race dove to the side as Bruiser came crashing down-knee-first, only to discover an empty mat. Harley scampered to his feet, leaped atop Bruiser's back and twisted the thick arm upward until it grazed Bruiser's neck.

A savage roar was followed by a spinning motion and

Bruiser regained the edge, the second fall ending with the titans rolling out of the ring.

"I don't understand why the WWA doesn't get more publicity," Race said after the match. "I can't remember a tougher opponent than Bruiser. He's something else."

Immediately after the match, talk centered around a possible rematch. Bruiser seemed quite excited about the prospect, as did Race, but for different reasons.

"I love wrestling someone like Race," said Bruiser. "I don't like him, but we do really go at it. Maybe people will realize that the WWA is a major federation and should be treated like one. The more opportunities we get to wrestle against NWA, AWA



As the match nears its climax, Bruiser does everything he can think of to try to win Race's NWA championship.

and WWF guys, the better it will be for all of us. There's always a need for more good wrestling. All those rules about not having enough arenas makes no sense to me."

"Competition brings out the best in me. Wrestling against Bruiser again would be great. I want the opportunity to bash in his skull. He has nice-colored blood," Race chuckled. "But I just got a phone call from someone whose name I can't reveal. This man, quite influential, suggested that I hold off on a rematch with Bruiser. He said that he didn't want the WWA to get too much exposure."

Who is that man? An official? A fellow wrestler?

"Just someone in an important position in wrestling," Race evaded the questions hurled at him. "I didn't say I was going through with it. I don't care what federation you're from. If they don't like it you know what they can do. I'll wrestle whoever I want. No one threatens me."

There was a threat?

"Yeah," Race said softly. "Who's afraid of the WWA?" □

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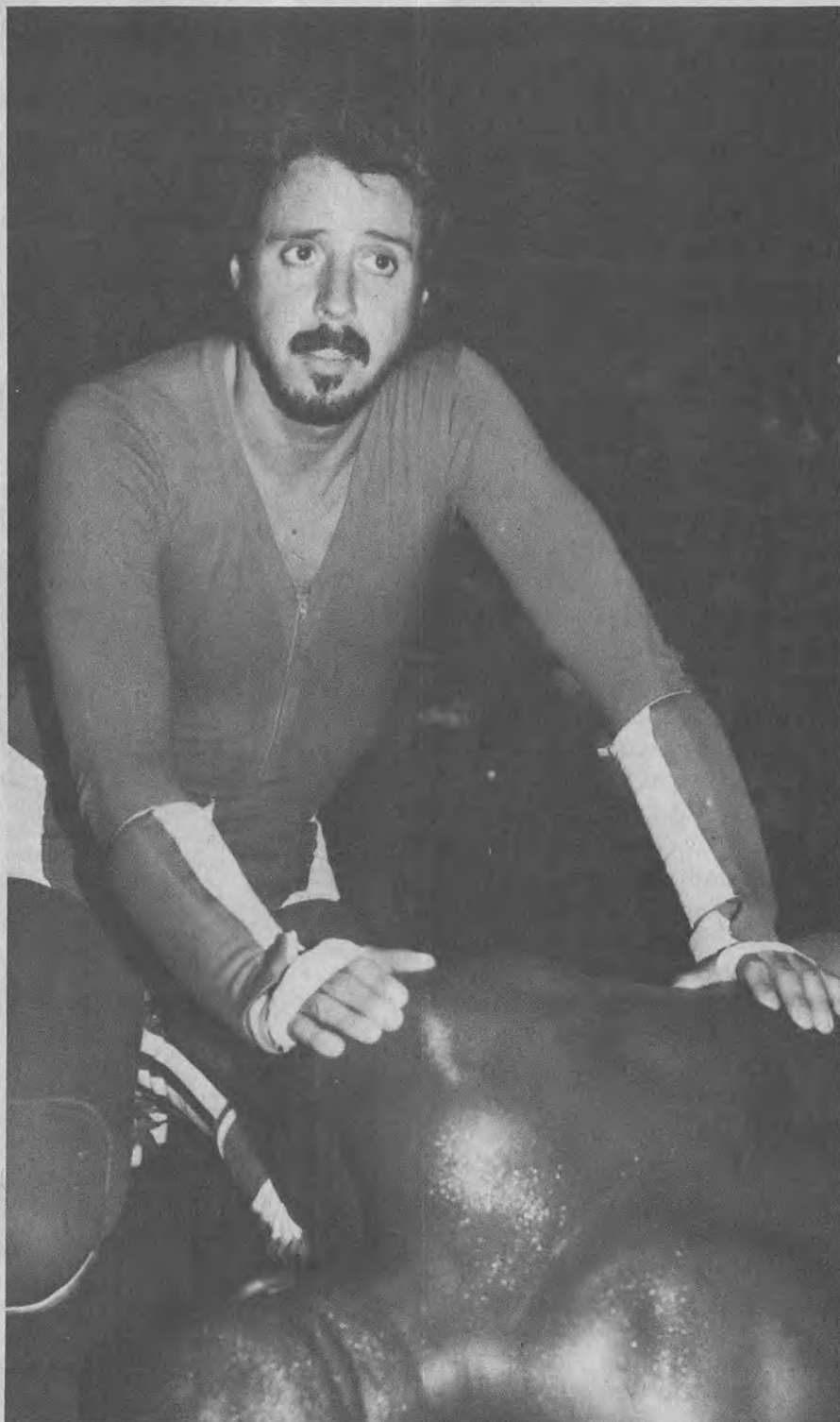
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FIRST SCAFFOLD MATCH

(Continued from page 21)



Manager Jimmy Hart knows he made a mistake by signing his wrestler to a Scaffold Match: Koko Ware has a broken wrist, and Bill Dundee (out of the picture) is gloating 15 feet above.

and fear of what could happen as the result of an unexpected fall.

Both men wrestled tentatively at first, but their confidence grew as they became accustomed to their strange surroundings. Both men

found themselves scrambling to maintain a fingerhold on the scaffold as literally dozens of near falls occurred during the first 10 minutes of the match.

There was a gasp from the

audience, the same kind of a sound you might hear at the circus when the high-wire artist feigns a misstep. But there was no falsity here: The gasp was followed by a mixture of cheers and horrified screams as Bill Dundee hurtled to the mat 16 minutes and 28 seconds after the match had begun.

The 20-count began: Koko Ware stood triumphantly above his opponent as Dundee scrambled to the top of the scaffold. A veritable king of the hill as he towered above the now-insignificant ring, Koko Ware was clearly in charge of the match. All he had to do was knock Dundee to the mat and it would all be over.

The 20-count reached 18 when Dundee finally stood atop the scaffold once more. Koko Ware took an instant attack position, but Dundee retreated a bit, waiting for his opening. About a minute and a half later, that opening came.

Dundee scored a hard right to Koko Ware's head which sent him falling to the mat . . . but Koko Ware was fast, and he reached out with his arms, catching the edge of the scaffolding at the last second. Hanging precariously above the mat, Ware struggled to pull himself back to his feet, but Dundee loosened Ware's grip with a few heels to the hand. Koko Ware dropped to the mat, nearly 15 feet below.

The doctor wasn't sure whether it was Dundee's attack on the hand or the impact of the fall itself, but he was certain, even before the X-rays were taken, that Ware had suffered a fractured wrist.

"Bill Dundee may think he won some kind of a victory the other night," said Ware. "I'll tell you one thing, though: That match settled nothing. All Dundee proved was that he can kick a man when he's down. Big deal. I'll heal up soon . . . and I'll be back to claim my revenge." □

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RIC FLAIR

(Continued from page 33)



Race cries out as Flair applies an agonizing abdominal stretch. Race claims that wrestlers are too stunned by Flair's "incompetence" to wrestle him effectively. Soon, according to the seven-time NWA champion, Flair will lose his title.

he was as good as anyone in the sport. On a given night, he could take anyone and do it brilliantly. His economy of movement, strategies, and ability to think with lightning swiftness made him seem unstoppable.

By the time he lost to Von Erich, there was little of that left. He was incredibly lucky to take the title back from Von Erich, something he never could have done if Kerry was a little more experienced. Since then, he's kept his title because his opponents can't believe his skills have left him so completely.

The Garvin match proved that. As a professional, I could tell Garvin was stunned by Flair's incompetence. Time and again, Garvin failed to take advantage of openings because he thought it was too easy; Flair had to be tricking him. As the match wore on, Garvin realized this was no trick; Flair is finished as a wrestler. If it weren't for the referee's inability to enforce the rules, Garvin would have been the new NWA champion.

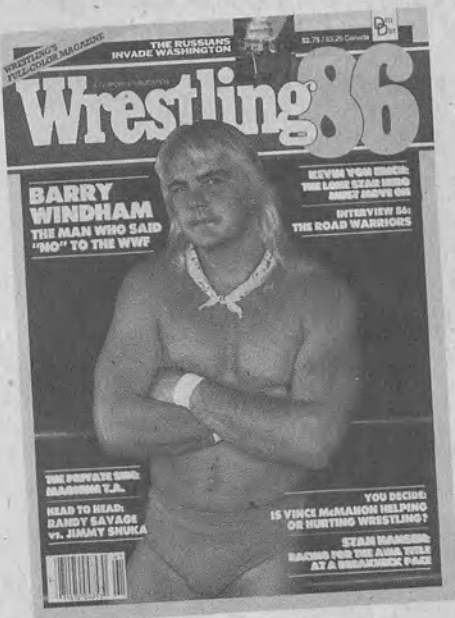
What caused Flair's deteriora-

tion? I can't say for sure. My guess is he never fully recovered from the backbreaking scheduled he endured during his second championship reign. It was an impossible series of matches to survive. The human body can only stand so much; it can't repair itself forever. Sooner or later, the damage becomes permanent. Muscles no longer respond, reflexes get sluggish, and desperation replaces confidence. Flair wouldn't be the first athlete to do too much during a title reign. More than one wrestler has seen his career go sour after he tried too hard to be the best champion in history. Flair is just one of many who saw the title as some sort of glory trail they had to rush down.

After Flair loses the title, which may already have happened by the time this article sees print, there won't be much left of the man. He may hang on for a couple of years living on his reputation. I've never liked the man, but I'll take no joy in seeing him reduced to a pathetic figure.

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THE ROAD WARRIORS

(Continued from page 35)



Road Warrior Animal whips a bloody Killer Khan toward Road Warrior Hawk, who will level the Mongolian with a clothesline (above). Hawk overpowers Riki Chosu (below left) and powerslams Khan (below right).



Chosu sees Hawk and Animal's double-clothesline developing (above left), but he is powerless to do anything about it (above right).

god in the person of Hawk or Animal, the result can *only* be awe-struck admiration."

The Warriors' opponents during their first tour of Japan, however, were hardly "five-foot-nothing Japanese." The teams that they faced included the combinations of Animal Hamaguchi and Killer Khan, Jumbo Tsuruta and Genichiro Tenryu, and Killer Khan and Riki Chosu.

"Indeed, our very first match in the pearl of the Orient was against Hamaguchi and Khan in

Chiba," Ellering said, "and we lived up to all of our advance publicity and then some. I am proud to say that Hawk and Animal obliterated the hopes and dreams of Hamaguchi and Khan in less than four minutes. Hawk pinned Hamaguchi at the 3:39 mark. And you sit there and ask me if our tour of Japan was successful? *Hahaha!*"

The second night of their tour, Ellering and the Warriors faced NWA International tag team champions Tsuruta and Tenryu in

a best-of-three-falls match for the International belts. Hawk downed Tsuruta with a vicious clothesline to claim the first fall, and as the two men tangled in the second fall, Tsuruta and Hawk were ensnared in a double-pin situation with Tsuruta bridging out at the two-count for the pinfall. Outraged by the pin decision in the second fall, Ellering directed Hawk and Animal to beat up the referee during the rest period between falls. The third and deciding fall never took place, and Tsuruta and Tenryu won the match decision when the Warriors were disqualified.

"That's typical of the kind of biased officiating we had to face in Japan," Ellering said. "Of course the Japanese officials are going to look out for their own. What else would you expect? Hawk was most certainly not pinned by Tsuruta, and I defy anyone to watch the videotape of that match and prove that his shoulders were down, because they weren't."

On the whole, however, Ellering considers the Warriors' tour of Japan an unprecedented success.

"Hawk and Animal gave the Japanese people a lesson in tag team wrestling," Ellering said. "I would venture to say that not a single one of the fans who turned out to witness Hawk and Animal had ever seen anything like them in their lives. And I would also venture to say that they had never in their lives seen such a feat of strength as when Animal pressed all 300-plus pounds of Killer Khan over his head and sent him flying halfway across the ring."

Ellering folded his arms across his chest once again and laughed his Sydney Greenstreet laugh.

"Ah yes," Ellering sighed, "it's truly a rare experience to be considered the best in the world—rare for everyone else, that is, because The Legion of Doom was, is, and always will be considered the very best in professional wrestling, whether it be in the United States, Japan, or anywhere else in the world!"

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Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board.



Rick Martel

TOP 10

- 1—**RIC FLAIR**
243, Minneapolis, MN
- 2—**RICK MARTEL**
236, Quebec City, Quebec
- 3—**HULK HOGAN**
302, Venice Beach, CA
- 4—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 5—**TITO SANTANA**
245, Mission, TX
- 6—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 7—**RANDY SAVAGE**
245, Sarasota, FL
- 8—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
275, Moscow, Russia
- 9—**KERRY VON ERICH**
260, Denton, TX
- 10—**BUTCH REED**
265, Kansas City, MO

TAG TEAMS

- 1—**THE ROAD WARRIORS**
No. 1 contenders to AWA and NWA World tag team titles
Combined weight: 567 pounds
- 2—**GREG VALENTINE & BRUTUS BEEFCAKE**
WWF World tag team champions
Combined weight: 511 pounds
- 3—**RICK MORTON & ROBERT GIBSON**
NWA World tag team champions
Combined weight: 453 pounds
- 4—**OLE & ARN ANDERSON**
National tag team champions
Combined weight: 525 pounds
- 5—**CHRIS ADAMS & GINO HERNANDEZ**
World Class tag team champions
Combined weight: 454 pounds
- 6—**IVAN & NIKITA KOLOFF**
No. 2 contenders to NWA tag team title
Combined weight: 524 pounds
- 7—**DAVEY BOY SMITH & DYNAMITE KID**
No. 1 contenders to WWF tag team title
Combined weight: 461 pounds
- 8—**KERRY & KEVIN VON ERICH**
No. 1 contenders to World Class tag team title
Combined weight: 499 pounds
- 9—**WAHOO McDANIEL & BILLY JACK HAYNES**
U.S. tag team champions
Combined weight: 505 pounds
- 10—**STEVE KEIRN & STAN LANE**
No. 1 contenders to Mid-Southern tag team title
Combined weight: 479 pounds

NWA

World Champion:
RIC FLAIR

243, Minneapolis, MN

- 1—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 2—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 4—**BUTCH REED**
265, Kansas City, MO
- 4—**KERRY VON ERICH**
260, Denton, TX
- 5—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
275, Moscow, Russia
- 6—**BUDDY LANDELL**
236, Los Angeles, CA
- 7—**RICK RUDE**
246, Robbinsdale, MN
- 8—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
- 9—**WAHOO McDANIEL**
260, Midland, TX
- 10—**HARLEY RACE**
253, Kansas City, MO

AWA

World Champion:
RICK MARTEL

236, Quebec City, Quebec

- 1—**SGT. SLAUGHTER**
310, Parris Island, SC
- 2—**STAN HANSEN**
322, Borger, TX
- 3—**NICK BOCKWINKEL**
245, Beverly Hills, CA
- 4—**LARRY ZBYSZKO**
248, Pittsburgh, PA
- 5—**MICHAEL HAYES**
255, Marietta, GA
- 6—**BORIS ZUKHOV**
254, Leningrad, Russia
- 7—**SCOTT HALL**
290, Minneapolis, MN
- 8—**JIM GARVIN**
235, Tampa, FL
- 9—**CURT HENNIG**
235, Minneapolis, MN
- 10—**JERRY BLACKWELL**
474, Stone Mountain, GA

WWF

World Champion:
HULK HOGAN

302, Venice Beach, CA

- 1—**TITO SANTANA**
245, Mission, TX
- 2—**RANDY SAVAGE**
245, Sarasota, FL
- 3—**RICK STEAMBOAT**
238, Honolulu, HI
- 4—**PAUL ORNDORFF**
253, Brandon, FL
- 5—**TERRY FUNK**
247, Amarillo, TX
- 6—**MAGNIFICENT MURACO**
274, Sunset Beach, HA
- 7—**RODDY PIPER**
231, Scotland
- 8—**ANDRE THE GIANT**
505, Grenoble, France
- 9—**JOHN STUDD**
364, Washington, DC
- 10—**KING KONG BUNDY**
446, Atlantic City, NJ

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

- 1—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 2—**BUDDY LANDELL**
236, Los Angeles, CA
- 3—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 4—**KRUSHER KHRUSHCHEV**
303, Thief River Falls, MN
- 5—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
- 6—**TERRY TAYLOR**
225, Vero Beach, FL
- 7—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
275, Moscow, Russia
- 8—**SUPERSTAR GRAHAM**
260, Paradise Valley, AZ
- 9—**JIMMY VALLIANT**
251, New York, NY
- 10—**RONNIE GARVIN**
231, Montreal, Quebec

CIAL G RATINGS

WORLD CLASS

- 1—**RICK RUDE**
246, Robbinsdale, MN
- 2—**BRIAN ADDAS**
238, Denton, TX
- 3—**KERRY VON ERICH**
260, Denton, TX
- 4—**GINO HERNANDEZ**
224, Houston, TX
- 5—**ICEMAN PARSONS**
242, St. Louis, MO
- 6—**KEVIN VON ERICH**
239, Denton, TX
- 7—**CHRIS ADAMS**
230, Stratford, England
- 8—**LANCE VON ERICH**
260, Dallas, TX
- 9—**SCOTT CASEY**
235, Amarillo, TX
- 10—**THE MISSING LINK**
273, parts unknown

MID-SOUTH

- 1—**BUTCH REED**
265, Kansas City, MO
- 2—**DICK SLATER**
235, Tampa, FL
- 3—**HUMONGOUS**
318, parts unknown
- 4—**HACKSAW DUGGAN**
280, Glens Falls, NY
- 5—**TED DiBIASE**
247, Omaha, NB
- 6—**STEVE WILLIAMS**
265, Tulsa, OK
- 7—**DICK MURDOCH**
270, Waxahachie, TX
- 8—**JAKE ROBERTS**
243, Baton Rouge, LA
- 9—**BUZZ SAWYER**
240, St. Petersburg, FL
- 10—**EDDIE GILBERT**
222, Lexington, TN

FLORIDA

- 1—**LEX LUGER**
280, Chicago, IL
- 2—**KENDALL WINDHAM**
220, Sweetwater, TX
- 3—**KEVIN SULLIVAN**
239, Boston, MA
- 4—**BARRY WINDHAM**
236, Sweetwater, TX
- 5—**WAHOO McDANIEL**
260, Midland, TX
- 6—**MIKE GRAHAM**
229, Tampa, FL
- 7—**BLACKJACK MULLIGAN**
310, Sweetwater, TX
- 8—**MAYA SINGH**
273, Tampa, FL
- 9—**HECTOR GUERRERO**
243, Mexico
- 10—**TYREE PRIDE**
231, Haiti

MID-SOUTHERN

- 1—**BILL DUNDEE**
214, Melbourne, Australia
- 2—**JERRY LAWLER**
234, Memphis, TN
- 3—**DUTCH MANTEL**
242, Bucksnorth, TN
- 4—**KOKO WARE**
229, Union City, TN
- 5—**PHIL HICKERSON**
238, Jackson, TN
- 6—**HARLEY RACE**
253, Kansas City, MO
- 7—**TARRAS BULBA**
237, Outer Mongolia
- 8—**BOTA**
270, Maori Islands
- 9—**JERRY JARRETT**
223, Nashville, TN
- 10—**TOJO YAMAMOTO**
230, Tokyo, Japan

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CONTINENTAL

- 1—**THE FLAME**
305, parts unknown
- 2—**EXOTIC ADRIAN STREET**
227, South Wales
- 3—**TOMMY RICH**
238, Hendersonville, TN
- 4—**JIMMY GOLDEN**
234, Montgomery, AL
- 5—**THE BULLET**
234, parts unknown
- 6—**ROBERT FULLER**
238, Dyresburg, TN
- 7—**BRAD ARMSTRONG**
226, Marietta, GA
- 8—**ROBERTO SOTO**
231, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 9—**ROY WELCH**
224, Tampa, FL
- 10—**BILL ASH**
224, Paris, AK

NORTHWEST

- 1—**BOBBY JAGGERS**
265, Dunlap, KS
- 2—**TOM ZENK**
237, Robbinsdale, MN
- 3—**MIKE MILLER**
260, Memphis, TN
- 4—**MOONDOG MORETTI**
245, Boise, ID
- 5—**STEVE PARDEE**
232, San Mateo, CA
- 6—**MEGA MAHARISHI**
260, Portland, OR
- 7—**KARL STEINER**
250, East Germany
- 8—**SCOTT DORING**
270, Minneapolis, MN
- 9—**CHRIS COLT**
230, San Francisco, CA
- 10—**TIMOTHY FLOWERS**
245, New York, NY

MOST POPULAR

- 1—**HULK HOGAN**
302, Venice Beach, CA
- 2—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 3—**KERRY VON ERICH**
260, Denton, TX
- 4—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 5—**RICK MARTEL**
236, Quebec City, Quebec
- 6—**TERRY TAYLOR**
225, Vero Beach, FL
- 7—**RICK STEAMBOAT**
238, Honolulu, HI
- 8—**HACKSAW DUGGAN**
280, New York, NY
- 9—**TITO SANTANA**
245, Mission, TX
- 10—**BARRY WINDHAM**
236, Sweetwater, TX

MOST HATED

- 1—**RIC FLAIR**
243, Minneapolis, MN
- 2—**RODDY PIPER**
231, Glasgow, Scotland
- 3—**OLE ANDERSON**
256, Minneapolis, MN
- 4—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
276, Moscow, Russia
- 5—**RANDY SAVAGE**
245, Sarasota, FL
- 6—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
- 7—**MAGNIFICENT MURACO**
274, Sunset Beach, HI
- 8—**RICK RUDE**
246, Robbinsdale, MN
- 9—**CHRIS ADAMS**
230, Stratford, England
- 10—**TED DiBIASE**
247, Omaha, NB

For period ended December 5, 1985

RATINGS ANALYSIS

This column will tell fans how we go about rating more than 150 wrestlers in 14 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important—and respected—ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

Readers write: Hoo, boy! When we published our "Announcers Top 10" ratings in the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated's* February 1986 installment of "Ratings Analysis," we never imagined that we'd receive the kind of response we did. But we did.

So in keeping with the demand in our mailbox, we're going to take a look this issue at some of your comments regarding those ratings. (And in case you missed the February 1986 issue of *PWI*, here's what those ratings were: ANNOUNCERS TOP 10: 1—Jesse Ventura; 2—Tony Schiavone; 3—Gordon Solie; 4—Jim Ross; 5—Joel Watts; 6—Mark Lowrance; 7—Bruno Sammartino; 8—Lance Russell; 9—Ken Resnick; 10—Bill Mercer.)

From Tom Vanderende, Mississauga, Ontario: Jesse Ventura number one? Whoever made up that Announcers Top 10 thing must have been smoking pot! On top of that, he was placed ahead of Gordon Solie, the Walter Cronkite of wrestling. Does that mean the days of professional insight and analysis are out, and childish complaining and bellyaching are in? It's bad enough hearing it from the wrestlers, and now it's commentators. Especially Ventura, the most immature and most pathetic color commentator ever in captivity. When I started watching wrestling 14 years ago, they didn't even have color commentators, at least not in this area. You know wrestling commentary is in trouble when Ventura is on top.

From Troy Kendell, Atlanta: I suppose you're going to get a lot of flak about your announcer ratings, but I for one have to agree with what you did. Frankly, I have never seen Mark Lowrance or Bill Mercer or Ken Resnick, so I'll have to take your word on those three. But as far as Jesse Ventura being number one, I agree wholeheartedly. Jesse is as unbiased as they come. Let's face it—every wrestling announcer is biased, one way or the other. How many times have you heard an announcer criticize *only* the rulebreakers and praise *only* the fan favorites? That describes 99 percent of the announcers I've ever heard, and that includes everyone on your list. But Jesse is the only announcer I've heard who actually gives credit where credit is due. He could have made fun of The British Bulldogs, for example, but he astutely pointed out their considerable skills, and even went so far as to claim that he'd like to manage them, in order to bring out more of their killer instinct. Bravo, Jesse! He's a breath of fresh air.

From Diana Kell, New York: What I want to know is how come you left my favorite announcer of all off the list, "Mean" Gene Okerlund? Oh, come on, give me a break! Gene is the absolute best when it comes to drawing out an unusual interview from a wrestler. He's funny, he's knowledgeable, and he's versatile—he can even play the piano! If you ask me, "Mean" Gene was slighted, and that's a pity.

A final nasty word: One letter we received was so soggy from all the venom it contained, it just couldn't be ignored. With the caveat

that the following are *his* opinions and not the feelings of the editorial staff of this magazine, Chuck Brinson of Boston had this to say:

I have had it up to here with your lousy ratings system. If I had an infinite number of monkeys typing away on an infinite number of typewriters for an infinite number of years, they might come up with all of Shakespeare's plays, but they couldn't come close to producing the level of stupidity I see reflected each month in your ratings and in "Ratings Analysis."

But the February 1986 issue of Pro Wrestling Illustrated was the last straw. Announcer ratings? What a waste of space! And you didn't even take the proper tack with them. If you're going to rate announcers, most of which are horrible to begin with (granted, Ventura is funny and Solie is a great analyst) why not rate the 10 worst announcers in the sport?

In order to correct your gross error, I've included my own ratings, 10 through one, with 10 being the absolute worst announcer I've ever seen or heard, and the next nine being pretty damn close. Print these ratings—if you dare! And by the way, doesn't it tell you something that half of these lousy 10 are WWF announcers?



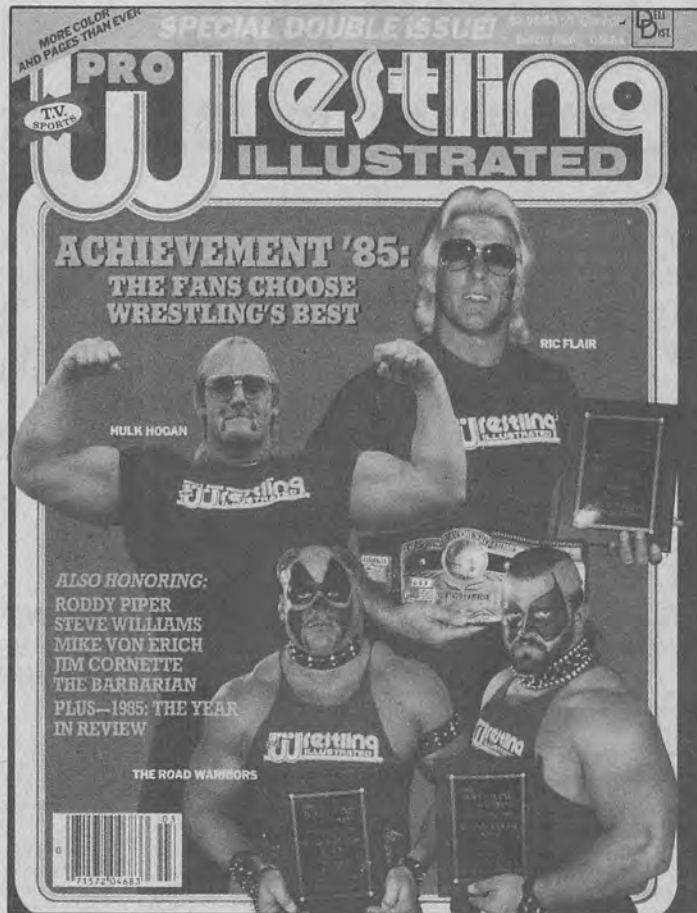
Gorilla Monsoon

BRINSON'S BOTTOM 10

- 10—GORILLA MONSOON
WWF wrestling
- 9—KEN RESNICK
Pro Wrestling USA
- 8—VINCE McMAHON
WWF wrestling
- 7—BOB CAUDLE
Mid-Atlantic wrestling
- 6—BRUNO SAMMARTINO
WWF wrestling
- 5—BILL MERCER
World Class wrestling
- 4—LARRY NELSON
AWA wrestling
- 3—LORD AL HAYS
Wrestling TNT
- 2—DAVID CROCKETT
World Championship Wrestling
- 1—GENE OKERLUND
WWF wrestling

The address for mail: We expect nearly as much outcry on this ratings analysis as we received on our original "announcers ratings" column (particularly if your name happens to be listed above!). Send all your comments to: "Ratings Analysis" c/o *Wrestler Annual*; Box 48; Rockville Centre; New York 11570. □

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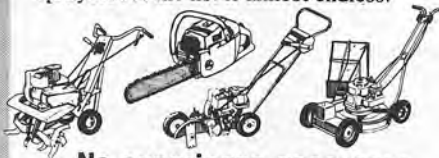
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